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Why write in English at all? In contrast to Africa and the West Indies, almost every linguistic region of India has *written* literary traditions, many of them as old as—or older than—English. Now all these areas have aspirant contemporary literatures, eager to express the modern world. English played an initial role in providing the models which enabled them to break with a largely non-secular tradition confined to verse. A pioneer novelist like Bankimchandra Chatterjee, or a poet like Michael Madhusudan Datta, began in English—but both rapidly switched to Bengali. That was in the nineteenth century, yet still today there are Indians who reject their mother tongue and embark upon the extraordinarily difficult feat of creative expression in a second language. They fall into a variety of categories—anglicized missionary products, expatriates, army men—some among them do not even know an Indian language—yet if they live in India they are cut off by thousands of miles from the sources of vitality of English, so that their language tends to be literary and ‘B.B.C.’, their attitudes self-conscious, and their slang out of date. And if they live in the West, they are cut off by thousands of miles from their subject matter.

At what audience are they aiming, and why? Not at the Anglo-Indians, of whom there are only about 350,000 altogether—highly literate but hardly literary, a kind of ‘poor white’ subculture, whose reading is largely confined to detective thrillers and romances. Khushwant Singh has roundly declared in his usual blunt manner: “The only authors to merit consideration are those published in England or the United States. This is not as outrageous as it may appear at first sight, as all Indian writers do in fact first try to have their works published in

London or New York and only come to Indian publishers after they have been rejected abroad or for reprint or paper-backs."<sup>1</sup> So it is at a predominantly Western, non-Indian audience that these writers aim. And in so far as they have an audience in India, it is their own class—the English-speaking Westernized elite (estimates vary from 1½ to 5 million out of 500,000,000)—especially the business and administrative class, perhaps army officers to some extent, lawyers and doctors. These writers have also recently been taken up by some university departments of English—partly because they provide Indian subject matter for research and teaching, and partly (ironically) because they help to obviate the charge in these nationalist days of being concerned exclusively with an alien culture. This is especially so in Mysore (the home of Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan), but not at all in the Hindi-speaking areas! On the other hand there is a lot of antagonism from regional language writers against Indian writing in English, although writers like Buddhadeva Bose and Bihnu Dey in Bengal have been themselves lecturers in English. For Buddhadeva Bose, Indian writing in English was a product of nineteenth century 'anglomania', now hopelessly overtaken by events.<sup>2</sup> At All-India Writers' Conferences since Independence, writers like Masti Venkatesa Iyengar (Kannada) or Vatsayan (Hindi) have condemned the continuing use of English as a retarding and shameful influence.

How do the Indian writers in English vindicate themselves against these charges? how do *they* envisage their role? Apart from franker admission that writing in English brings in more money and international prestige, their most ambitious claim is to represent All-India as opposed to parochial segments.<sup>3</sup> Since they cannot possibly represent the peasant masses or even the lower middle class, this comes to mean Eternal India or the 'Soul' of India. Hence a great concern with 'Indianness'—striving both to define it and embody it. Ironical indeed that the most Westernized Indian should set himself up as the most Indian—but we all know the extent to which the Hindu abroad tends to develop into a most insistent expounder of Upanishads and Gita. Not only may this be a reaction to the arrogance of the apparently triumphant West, but it is also called forth by that numerous Western audience which is as determined today as the nineteenth century German Romantics to find Wisdom in Brahmins and Light from the East.

But a compelling and authentic theme is also available here for the Indian writer in English, for his very choice of medium reveals him a victim of that crisis of identity which afflicts all Westernized Asians and Africans—how to be modern without losing native roots, without becoming an imitation Westerner? This defining of Indianness and the pursuit of a respectable image of oneself as 'civilized' has been the lifetime's irritated preoccupation of the most notorious of all contemporary Indian writers in English—Nirad C. Chaudhuri, who elected to be 'European' (what he calls Aryan) by proving that all that is best in the Indian tradition is actually European! This perverse but highly entertaining stance is the very opposite of that taken by most other Indian writers in English. A typical novel of the Westernized Indian rediscovering his forgotten but eternal heritage is Balachandra Rajan's portentously over-written *The Dark Dancer*. The hero returns from Cambridge to his South Indian home to find the cow still on the doorstep and his mother fixing up a bride: he revolts, and neglects his new wife for an English girl, Cynthia, whom he had known at the university, but a visit to a temple and his wife's self-sacrifice in a communal riot bring home to him the hidden strength of the tradition he had presumed to thrust aside. Much of the support that Indian writing in English gains in India derives from its representing India's spiritual truths to the West. This is the standpoint taken in the only extended survey published so far, by Srinivasa Iyengar of Andhra University, who associates it with the mysticism of Tagore, the sanctified politics of Gandhi, and above all with Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry whose *Savitri* is a 2,400 line epic poem in English on the coming Superworld of Supermind.

Another, less exalted role that the Indian novelist in English takes upon himself is social documentation—to make known his country, its problems and customs, to the Western reader. There is plenty of curiosity about India—the subject matter sells the book. As early as 1874 the Revd. Lal Behari Day set the fashion for such presentation with his *Bengal Peasant Life*, which is little more than fictionalized anthropology. Thus a high percentage of the current output is realist in the 19th century European tradition. A strong undercurrent of indignation against social injustice (usually without political commitment) may accompany such writing, of which the best-known and earliest exponent was Mulk Raj Anand. His *Untouchable* was



written in 1933 and *Coolie* in 1935: both select the underdog as hero, and show him browbeaten by an exploitative, caste-ridden society. A more recent writer in the same vein is Kamala Markandaya, whose *Nectar in a Sieve* or *A Handful of Rice* depicts the hopeless struggle of the poor against rising prices, cut-throat competition, and heartless corruption.

In spite of their admirers, I find it hard to rank Anand or Markandaya very high as artists: their heroes are sentimentalized and characterization is stock; Anand's Europeans in particular are gross caricatures. The design upon us is all too blatant, as in the following extract from *A Handful of Rice* (Ravi, a tailor's apprentice, is explaining to his employer why he got drunk one night):

There had been, there was, his sense of outrage that *they* should go rich at *his* expense: he and his ilk perennially scratching round for a living, while *they* sat still and waxed fat on huge peremptory margins. He said resentfully, 'I was upset. Anyone would be.'

'Over the jacket?'

'The pricing. We do all the work, profit.'

'We make a profit too.'

'Oh yes,' he said sarcastically, indignation overcoming his awe of Apu. 'I daresay we do, by permission. It's so small it's not worth having.'

'Really?'

'Yes, really,' he said robustly, upheld by heady currents. 'What's more, we *never* charge enough. Five rupees for a dress! Do you know it takes me half the day just to do the buttonholes and buttons?'

'You must endeavour to be quicker.'

The dry voice punctured him. He said try.'

'I know. I find you satisfactory. I'm not complaining.'

Ravi rose to go, but the old man had not finished.

'You want to charge more,' he said. 'What would you do if our customers went elsewhere?'

'Where would they go if everyone put up their prices?'

'Would everyone?'

For the benefit of Western readers, a good deal of local colour and social background is put in, together with explanations like this:

For you cannot eat a great deal of mango, even when it

similarly, R. K. Narayan tells us that Ravana was "a king with ten heads and twenty hands, who was oppressing mankind and had abducted Rama's wife Sita."<sup>6</sup> Some of the realistic writers descend to a pretty trashy level, like Bhabani Bhattacharya, largely because their style tends to be so cliché-ridden or, as in the case of Anita Desai, so over-strained. Khushwant Singh writes of Punjab and the Sikhs in a virile, brisk style: his *Train to Pakistan* is a straightforward account of the communal massacres of 1947—far more satisfactory than Balachandra Rajan's romanticized hysteria. Manohar Malgonkar spins a brisk yarn in *A Bend in the Ganges* and *Distant Drum*, opposing the bluff military virtues to vindictive terrorism and Congress jobbery. But when not holding our interest by novelty of subject matter, such novels are tedious unless redeemed by subtlety of insight or expressiveness of style.

#### *Is realism possible?*

One may even question whether it is possible to write authentic realistic novels in English about a milieu where the medium of expression is another language. How do you convey speech differences of dialect or class? Do you make your working class speak like Cockneys, or give them a Birmingham accent? Will you give East Bengalis a Somerset or Irish brogue? Look again at the quotation above from Kamala Markandaya: the dialogue is in a peculiarly neutral 'conversational' style, the kind of thing you find in teach-yourself-a-language books. Basically it is middle class, yet even a warehouse-breaker and boot-legger like Damodar (Kamala Markandaya calls him a 'city slicker') speaks the same language:

'You're very silent,' Damodar said suddenly, his grey cat's eyes fixed intently on the withdrawn younger man. 'Is it that nothing ever happens, or you don't want to tell?'

'Oh well,' said Ravi humbly, 'we live very quietly, you know — no fireworks down our way. Besides,' he said and sighed, 'it's so restful here — not like our house, there's always someone shouting or quarrelling, you can even hear it up on the roof.'

More enterprising writers attempt to bring something of the Indian flavour across by departing from a purely English idiom. K. K. Narayan has evolved a naively simple style, occasionally dropping into quaintness, to express the naivety of his characters, for example here talking of America:

Anand and Bhattacharya resort to literal translations of Panjabi and Bengali idiom: *Coone* is full of expressions like "May you die! May your liver burn! May you fade away! You of the evil star!", "My little sister, the eater of his masters." "Ohe"s and "Vai"s, while Bhattacharya gives us "Why you stick your eyes to my cooking pot, mother of Onu" or "May the vessel of your life float on the sea of existence." But the effect is merely odd or comic: Dr. Raj Kumar Kaul of Rajasthan University, in an essay on Narayan among the *Essays Presented to Amy G. Stock* on her departure from India, has even gone so far as to suggest that "the mere act of translating rural or suburban India into English makes it comic." The problem is more than a question of idiom—an entire structure of feeling is embodied in a language: what we are reading is still a translation, spuriously proffering the authenticity of an original.

Add to this the pressure of reader-expectation, or the desire to present a flattering picture to foreigners. How can we, as readers from an alien culture, distinguish the realistic from the imaginatively falsified, the authentic from the inauthentic? All reading within our own culture is conditioned by our experience of that culture, so that we constantly relate what we read to traditional norms and our own lived experience. Without knowing a word of Russian, we may well accept in translation the masterpieces of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky as genuine expressions of the Russian spirit, because they have already been accepted as such by the Russians and their translators. But in Commonwealth literature we have the unprecedented situation of a

ature written for outside consumption, not so guaranteed internal readership—in fact frequently rejected by prejudice extolled by preconception. The problem rises acutely with most widely esteemed abroad of contemporary Indian novel in English: R. K. Narayan. In the inhabitants of the small provincial town of Malgudi, where all his stories are set, Narayan sends us with what may well be taken as a view of the Indian character (at least as found in Mysore), which has a surreptitious approximation to certain stereotypes of the gentleman Indian as opposed to the brash rough-handling Westerner.

His favourite heroes are childlike, obstinate, wayward, defenceless yet curiously vulnerable. They painstakingly pursue the minute logic of a naive single-mindedness, yet remain innocent however crooked, and the worst disaster that can befall them is to begin all over again. This fits in very well with

Hindu concept of life as play (*lila*), but it is questionable whether the people of Mysore are any more like that than the villagers of T. F. Powys are like English villagers. Yet these are novels written for foreigners, who cannot know what the people of Mysore are like, and so will tend to believe that they are as Narayan depicts them. Compare the peasants in Narayan's *The Guide* taking possession of their holy man with childlike assurance, with the Bengali novelist Manik Bandyopadhyay's treatment of the same theme in *The Puppets' Tale*, and the patronizing caricatural element in Narayan is immediately apparent. Of course Narayan is a satirist, but the disturbing thought arises that in novel after novel he sees his fellow Indians much as the more paternalistic British used to see them as charming, impractical, wildly speculative and somewhat ridiculous. Raja Rao's ration office clerks in *The Cat and Shambhu* are even tend to an inscrutable (oriental) wisdom. The fact that these books are mythological structures, perfectly valid as imaginative creations, does not prevent them from perpetuating an attitude of amused indulgence (whether of brahmin or sahib) toward the childlike, muddled, gentle Indian.

In view of the affirmed other-worldliness of the Indian tradition, we should not perhaps expect realism to be the strong point of the Indian novel. Yet in the novels of the regional languages, allowance made for romantic and sentimental tendencies, there is a good deal of authentic feeling and close observation of reality, even among the few that have been translated, like Prem

Chand's *Godan* (U.P.), S. N. Pendse's *Wild Bapu of Garambh* (Maharashtra), Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Pather Panchali* (Bengal), or Syed Waliullah's *Lal Shalu* (East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). In Manik Bandyopadhyay we find a novelist as unsentimental and steady-eyed as in any language akin to Flaubert without the sensationalism. But the Indian novel in English, as if aware of its limitations as a medium of reality, or else reflecting the uprootedness of its exponents, shies off in two directions: into nostalgia and fantasy. The nostalgia may be for the golden age of the rishis, when *dharma* was enthroned, or even, in an upper class writer like Atia Hosain writing of her Luc now childhood, for the lost stability of the British Raj. Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* is steeped in *fin-de-siècle* tears ("as though Truth began where sorrow was accepted, and India began where Truth was acknowledged. So sorrow is our river, sorrow our earth . . ."<sup>19</sup>) and the hero ends up sobbing into his pillow with a song of Sankara on his lips or a poem of Baudelaire:

The entire book is pervaded by the past and the sense of its loss "ghosts, dignitaries, crusaders, kings, poets",<sup>12</sup> the songs of the troubadours, or Yājñavalkya conversing with his wife: tradition alone gives security. Graham Greene remarks in his Introduction to *The Financial Expert* that even Narayan's comedies all have "the undertone of sadness". But the flight into fantasy is surely more befitting of the people that gave the world its greatest fund of fairy tales; anyone who has compared the Indian with the Greek epics will know how much more riotous is the Indian imagination. This compulsion of the imagination to launch off on its own, even from a seemingly realistic situation, for the writer to be carried away by his own creative momentum, is apparent in most of Narayan's novels, all four of Sudhin Ghosh's fictionalized autobiography, and in every chapter of G. V. Desani's extraordinary *All About H. Hatter*.

Consider Narayan's *The Financial Expert*. It begins as straightforward satire of a small-time con-man Margayya, who sits under a banyan tree as middle-man between the peasants and the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank, cheating both of their money. But after he has been humiliated by the

secretary of the Bank and his account book thrown down the drain by his small son, he embarks on a forty-day propitiation of the goddess Lakshmi. A "cadaverous" priest he followed on impulse in the late afternoon, tells him that "beyond Sarayu, towards the North, there is a garden where there is a ruined temple with a pond. You will find red-lotus there. Get one, burn its petals to a pitch-black and mix it with *gher*." Margayya finds the place with difficulty half a mile across fields as the sun was going down in a large wood, hedged in with bramble and thorns, where "flower gardens had gone wild—all kinds of creepers, jasmine bushes and nerium growing ten feet high, were intertwined and mixed up." In a little pavillion on the far side of the pond, someone stirs in the gloom. Margayya shouts:

"Hey, who are you?" vaguely remembering that if it were a ghost it would run away on hearing such a challenge. But the answer came back, 'I'm Dr. Pal, journalist, correspondent and author.' Margayya espied a row of white teeth bared in a grin.<sup>13</sup>

And Dr. Pal, "a lank, tall man with sunken cheeks and a crop of hair falling on to his forehead," wades through the greenish water in his blue shorts to pick the red lotus. Subsequently he sells Margayya a manuscript entitled *Red Life, or the Science of Marital Happiness*, which by a series of equally extravagant developments finally leads to his setting up an Investment Bank offering twenty per cent interest. Margayya calculated: "If I set twenty thousand rupees deposit each day and pay fifteen per cent in interest, I have still five thousand a day left in my hands as my own..."<sup>14</sup> It is all wildly absurd—the money piling up in sacks in the unprotected house—until the crash comes, precipitated by Pal (in whom psychological plausibility is sacrificed to moral allegory). Character-drawing is of a Chaplinesque or puppet-like simplicity—as in the engrossed reading of *Red Life* by the publisher Lal,<sup>15</sup> or Margayya's behaviour with the Bank Manager when opening a new account.<sup>16</sup> At the very end, with his credit gone and property seized, Margayya proposes to go back under the banyan tree with his knobby box and start all over again; he turns to play with his grandchild, as previously with his son: "Life has been too dull without him in this house."

It gives the novel a very satisfying symbolical structure, but hardly convincing as a realistic possibility. An earlier novel,

*The English Teacher*, similarly opens in a perfectly normal world with the hero teaching Shakespeare from Verity in a college, and inspecting a new house to move into with his young wife and daughter. But surrealistic overtones early make themselves felt (the episode in the lavatory), and after the death of his wife from typhoid, the English teacher abandons college and Shakespeare for the play-world of children (a favourite Narayan theme), and enters into spiritualist communication with his dead wife, who in the final pages comes to sit upon his bed hurling with her "the overwhelming fragrance of jasmine".

Narayan's writing has great charm and delicacy—especially in depicting nuances of feeling and the momentary reactions of people to each other, their inconsistencies and obsessions. But the formulae of characterization and interaction hardly vary from novel to novel, finally building up a world as claustrophobic and mechanical as Ivy Constance Burnett's—spun out from the mind rather than observed in reality. Thus the protective, proud and bewildered attitude of Margayya to his son in *The Financial Expert* of 1953 is repeated in that of Jagan to Mali in *The Sweet Vendor* of 1967, and the two young men betray their parents with the same dogged wilfulness in pursuit of motor cars and liquor in both novels. And in both cases the child was a gift of the gods, prayed for with special offerings after years of childlessness. The way all Narayan's characters are built up corresponds more to stereotypes in his mind than to the individualized variety of real life: it is universal moral structures he pursues, not the specific Indian reality. Dr. Pal too has his parallel in the sudden intrusion of Chinna Dorai, ex-sculptor now a manufacturer of hair-dye, who leads Jagan off to another abandoned lotus pond with a dilapidated shrine to hunt for a block of stone which his master had begun to carve but then abandoned long ago to "water treatment". "I am sixty-nine," says Chinna Dorai; "I'm prepared to die peacefully on my seventieth birthday, if I can finish that image and install it on its pedestal." And so this situation is developed—inconsequential, quaint, a kind of parody of what Europeans have always found quaint and inconsequential in ways of life to which they had no key—like E. M. Forster finding everything so "queer" in *The Hill of Devi*.

*Lost souls: Ramaswamy and H. Hatterr*

The most rewarding truly authentic theme for the Indian novelist in English is the exploration of his own spiritual anarchy, wandering in limbo between East and West. This is the concern of the two most original achievements of the Indian novel in English: *The Serpent and the Rope* by Raja Rao, published in 1960, and *All About H. Hatterr* by G. V. Desani, first published in 1948 and recently re-issued. Rao and Desani, from Mysore and Sind respectively, have both engaged on the spiritual quest and now set up as gurus at Austin University, Texas, and their novels probe the experience that made that quest necessary. But though each concerned with language and identity, they pursue their explorations from opposite standpoints: the one serious and nostalgic, the other satirical and fantastic. For both the theme is confrontation with the West and failure—one takes refuge in self-pity, the other in self-mockery—but both finally point to an escape from the self altogether, and from the dichotomy of East and West.

Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* derives its conviction from an autobiographical base, which in spite of special pleading preserves the heart of the experience intact. The hero, Ramaswamy, writing a thesis in the South of France to connect the Albigensian heresy with Indian origins, marries a French fellow-scholar, Madeleine, whose aim is to establish that the Holy Grail is Buddha's begging bowl. These two theses are only part of an intricate network whereby Rao tries to establish what is East and what is West and how they interrelate. Briefly, India is represented by the Vedantic absolute ("Truth" according to Rama), which is beyond history, beyond death, beyond good and evil, beyond all distinctions. Europe, on the other hand, celebrates joy in the world and history—it believes in change and progress, hence optimism and communism: contrast India, the land of tradition and fatality. (All this is very questionable: India might equally be considered the land where joy has been cultivated and Europe sadness—*saccidānanda* and temple statuary contrasted with sin and crucifixion.) Europe distinguishes between the self and the object, hence science and the possibility of scientific objectivity. But the Indian is a solipsist, the world exists only in his consciousness: "The perfect civilization is where the world is not, but where there is nothing but 'I'." India is masculine=spirit (*puruṣa*: passive), Europe is



feminine matter (*prakṛti*: active) "Life is made for woman, man is a stranger on this earth. Rama represents India, Madeleine represents Europe: their marriage fails, for each fails to meet the expectations of the other, and Rama's attempt to be a European historian ends in divorce and his departure to seek a guru in Travancore.

The book is extremely long and complex, interweaving paradoxical themes, for not only is India an expression of the masculine spiritual principle and Europe of the feminine material principle, but masculine and feminine are contained in both.

Tradition and mysticism in Europe, for instance, or the cult of cow and mother in India. Tradition is the feminine subordinated to law (spirit), so Rama glorifies the coronation of the English queen. So too the Hindu wife must worship her husband: "To be a woman was to be absorbed by a man."<sup>19</sup> Of religions, Hinduism alone is Indian, timeless, beyond good and evil: all the rest—Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Cathars and Parsis—are historical (they rose in time with personal founders) and moral. Catholicism, with its flexibility and absorption of immemorial tradition, is nearest to Hinduism, so ironically Madeleine by embracing Buddhism as the most accessible religion of Rama's own country only moves further away from him. To some extent the book is an overgrown compendium of erudite quotation and mystifying speculation, folklore and symbolism, for its essential subject matter is the mind of Rama pursuing himself, vindicating himself. It is the mind of a South Indian brahmin, delighting more in subtlety than common sense: "Sin is to think that in acting you are the actor: freedom, that you never could be the doer or enjoyer of an act."<sup>20</sup> At times the symbols entirely take over, as in the long peroration on woman.<sup>21</sup> The world is transformed into schemata of the imagination: Marxism is feminine, Nazism masculine, the one world-building, the other world-destroying, hence the hatred of Nazis for Jews.

For most readers there is far too much of this kind of thing smacking less of Vedanta than of Hegel—yet it is the essential backdrop to the action of the novel. For much as Rama thinks in terms of timelessness, he is very much living in time, and the breakdown of his marriage after his first child dies and the second is still-born, causes him deep grief. His philosophical stance may be seen partly as a cause of this breakdown, partly

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as an attempt to come to terms with it. Professor C. D. Narasimhaiah of Mysore University blames Madeleine for "withdrawing" from "im," whereas the usual English reaction has been to find Rama such a solipsist as to be incapable of loving another except as an extension of himself.<sup>21</sup> It is true, as Professor Narasimhaiah says, that Rama develops "enthusiasm for her country, culture and tradition," but equally he believes (and tells Madeleine) that "India is the guru of the world."<sup>22</sup> The most valid and moving aspect of the novel is this confrontation of two minds—the transcendental and the moral, the European and the Indian—striving and failing to understand one another. Essentially, it is a struggle for dominance. Far from withdrawing, Madeleine offers herself fully and it is Rama who shrinks away: "But I'm a Brahmin, and for me touch and knowledge go with the holiness of surrender, of woman not taking me there, but I revealing to her that. He demands of her "an heir, a son" but she offers "her whole regnum of creation."<sup>23</sup> Rama is happiest fascinating women with his clever talk (e.g. p. 115), and flees Madeleine's sexual demands (p. 166) for the admiring ear of Savithri, a student at Cambridge, who is well-nigh mythologized as Rama's notion of eternal Indian girlhood ("She spoke rapidly, and in between her amusing chatter was a space of sorrow as large as her eyes."). Has he ever loved Madeleine? "Even to take Madeleine's arm in public seemed a desecration to me. But with Savithri it was different. Why, I wondered, why indeed, as I left the barrier and went towards the waiting plane"<sup>24</sup>—taking Madeleine's leave with a formal "long namaskar" on his second departure for India, while she stays behind to have the baby in his absence. It is only after this second child is still-born, and Savithri opts for a traditional family-arranged marriage to Pratap Singh, the Personal Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of some Indian Province, that Rama returns to find Madeleine withdrawn into Buddhist penances. These closing sections are the most heart-rending, for as Rama gets on with his thesis, Madeleine undergoes the forty-one day fast on Buddha Avalokitesvara. She sleeps on one side only, the flowers begin to speak to her, she develops powers of healing the sick, rescues caterpillars crossing the road, and has visions from a Black Madonna. All Rama's clever talk cannot win her back—unlike Savithri, she's his intellectual equal—so now he is completely alone: "There is

nobody to go to now: no home, no temple, no city, no climate, no age. In spite of his image of himself renouncing the world and the flesh like Buddha riding off on Kunthaka, he is still far from non-attached and all these last pages are permeated with an intense love of the particular—landscape, flowers, people—and the poignance of its loss.

Desani on the other hand presents the world as a huge joke. His hero, far from being a privileged brahmin, is a social outcaste—the bastard son of a European seaman and a Malay mother (hence a kind of Anglo-Indian, because he is brought up in India but Desani wished to make him as unspecific as possible)—the archetypal underdog, kicked around and constantly falling flat on his face, but up again the moment after, perky as ever. On the death of his father, he was taken from his mother and adopted by the English Missionary Society, from whose school he fled at the age of fourteen—not to Cambridge and the Sorbonne, but into the School of Life. He calls himself H (for Hindustaniwalla) Hatterr—after the top hat of the headmaster, a symbol of the prestige to which he aspires. Far from rejecting education, he takes with him from the missionary school an English dictionary, *Latin Self-Taught*, *French Self-Taught*, and five hundred stereoscopic slides of Florence, Naples, Venice, Paris, Rome, the Vatican, etc., out of which (and any other bric-a-brac that comes his way) he constructs a culture and a language for himself.

And it is in this constructed language, smelted with Hatterr's inimitable verve, that Desani writes his autobiography for him thus side-stepping the whole problem of Indian English by wilfully using a mixture of cliché, outdated slang, and bathetic pretension to express Hatterr's total alienation. The style is difficult to quote in brief. Here is Hatterr describing his dog:

If ever a feller had a hell of a bother from a dog, I had some from my canine.

Yet, when I purchased him, I suffered from an incredible orthodoxy: acquire the chap at any cost!

I was dam' anxious: as if I were about to receive the Fellowship of the Royal Microscopic Society, without microscoping for same!

That very able seaman Jenkins, who sold me the pup, showed me the works: what it could do.

As a pup standard, the canine Jenkins wouldn't touch any tiffin, but confectionery!

Except for an occasional bone-bonus to brush and sharpen his teeth with—any dog's hygiene—he absolutely rejected all natural animal diet and went like hell for any delicatessen, provided it were a bonbon!

He'd O.H.M.S. *pasthaste* swallow any candy, jelly babies, cookies, chocolate sundaes, rarebits, sweet lozenges, goodies with mottoes on 'em, and any species of ice-cream hokey-pokey.

It was dam' funny!<sup>29</sup>

And here on the religious life:

In India, if you decide to go religious, be a semi-dietine, a sacred chicken, belong to the Cloth, no need hullaballo at all. You simply cast off clothing. You wear the minimum loin cloth, walk freely on the plains of the country of Hindustan, and, if you are a genuine feller at all, you spend your life comforting, instructing, and teaching the populace. That's the bush theologi -indica in a nut-shell for you.<sup>30</sup>

It is a style constantly panting and falling over itself, all in commas and exclamation marks. It veers into puns and punning misunderstandings reminiscent of James Joyce, like "sinfant", "burnt at the steak",<sup>31</sup> "lingua franca" (of Sanskrit erotic poetry),<sup>32</sup> "oldlongsigh" (for Auld Lang Syne), and is full of pseudo-scientific jargon, loose journalism ("testifying as to the departing sun"<sup>33</sup>), and literary cliché ("Thereby hangs a tale", "Everyman I will go with thee", a lion is "a magnificent tawny specimen"<sup>34</sup> etc.). There are plenty of Indianisms like "in debts", "anti-climax behaviour", "horse's mouth truth", and some superb misunderstandings:

'Do you propose to contribute to the Royal Geographical Society or do you prefer the All-India Gazetteer?'

'Contribute? Man, you misunderstand me sometimes! After the work I have put in, I dam' well expect to be contributed!'<sup>35</sup>

But Hatterr's style is not the only style in the book. His friend Banerrji has a quite different personality—pedantic and solemn, the mofussil literary gent, always quoting Shakespeare (The Bard) and the Bible, interspersing his sentences with "Please", "Excuse me", "I am much obliged" and "Thank you very much", equally in awe of education, describing himself as

"Hindu student gentleman"—a convinced cliché-ridden universalist ("Mankind is one. The culture of mankind is for all."), never happier than when delivering moral or literary opinions, as here on Conan Doyle:

'Como esta?' I sai  
you. Banerrji.'

'Good evening, please.'

'Anything on your mind, old feller? I know you are a solemn chap, taking life seriously and all that. But you are looking positively sombre, man.'

'Excuse me, Mr. H. Hatterr, but my heart bleeds for you. As your innermost confident, I am aware, that you have been through hell on earth and the various allied emotional phases of the spirit. You are going through a terrible spiritual notre-dame

'Don't mensch. Cable me a condolence. Between vous and moi, make it February 31st. Second notions, don't wire me! Radio moi un coup de téléphone!'

'The fact remains that your inside pendulum is losing motivity. The clock isn't keeping time. I am not trying to take your monkey off your back. With the highest moral motives, excuse me, no one can do that. The Bard states plainly, Macbeth speaking. Therein the patient must minister to himself. Nevertheless

'Thanks, old feller.'<sup>37</sup>

dilemma of the imperial legacy. Banerji has abandoned his traditional language and culture to be an archaic parody of a 19th century schoolmaster, and poor Hatterr never had any culture at all. For both of them a mythical distant England embodies all that is good and true.<sup>39</sup> As Banerji puts it: "Excuse me, I do not belong to the backward India. Arise, awake, advance! I already believe in the European sanitation and the water closet. Mrs. Banerji and I are already using forks and knives..."<sup>40</sup> Hatterr sets out to be a sahib, actually shoots a crocodile in Baluchistan and marries an Anglo-Indian girl, but at the point where his autobiographical examination begins, he has just been thrown out of the Sahibs' Club and decides to "go Indian". Still pursuing his education, he consults a series of holy sages (all of them rogues), and at every subsequent "life-encounter" is duped by someone more cunning than himself. Finally he sets off for England—"this other Eden, this demi-paradise, this precious stone set in the silver sea . . . among this happy breed of men"<sup>41</sup>—confident that Lord Nuffield will help out a fellow Christian.<sup>42</sup> How he gets on we can only guess, but finally in sheer desperation ("to ensure me against drifting from isolation to utter eclipse"<sup>43</sup>), he writes his "autobiographical" to find out who he is and what his place is in the world.

And Desani's relation to Hatterr? Well, he had not been to Cambridge and the Sorbonne either, ran away from school as a boy and joined up with wandering *sadhus* . . .<sup>44</sup> He calls his book a "gesture" of the same order as that of a peasant who has been burgled placing a tree across a railway line<sup>45</sup>: this would indicate that he too felt that life had not treated him justly (a gesture against a world of rogues and fools? or against his cultural situation?). He wrote *All About H. Hatterr* in England during the war years, and his prefatory remarks to the reader<sup>46</sup> are in a "rigmarole English" not so very different from Hatterr's. But Desani was also broadcasting for the B.B.C. and reviewing for *The Listener*. He *knows* what he is doing, and in answer to critics who initially rejected the manuscript, draws attention to his achievement:

H. Hatterr—who tells his own story—isn't a writer. How could he know the theory and practice of perfections? If, in spite of it, I have made him write at all, well, it is because I am clever.<sup>47</sup>

It is as an artist that Desani finds his identity, his self-vindication, his response to a divided world—in the exercise of sheer inventive fantasy, in comedy not only of language but of situation and character, in hilarious verve. The situations are wildly far-fetched: Hatterr is tempted by his lust for a woman lion-tamer to act as "living plate" in a circus act: he is decoyed as partner for the night to a homosexual Vaishnava saint who becomes possessed by a demon and chases Hatterr round and round the room while Hatterr's cowardly dog Jenkins quakes beneath the bed: he is persuaded to sub it to a grotesque ceremony in his own house at which the title of "Ocean of Musical Art" is conferred upon him by a couple of drunken roughs disguised as pandits—his wife unexpectedly returns in the middle accompanied by Major Appadine Sinclair ("'Christ-mas! What is the meaning of this, Harry? Where is all the furniture?'"). In all cases the unique quality of the humour lies not so much in the absurd situations as in the grotesque language through which they are perceived—for instance, Hatterr's description of Harrow-voo's song in condemnation of women and the effect of the luscious descriptions on Hatterr's own essentially normal and virile impulses (all this seen by the reader in the larger context of poor Hatterr, unknown to himself, chosen to represent the Divine Lover for the night).<sup>48</sup> And who is it that puts Hatterr into all these situations? Why, his dear pal Banerrji, accompanied by many a moral exordium and quotation from the Bard. For as Hatterr comes to learn, it's "dog eat dog" and "the Devil take the dividend."

At one level Hatterr is a picaresque Everyman, an embodiment of the irrepressible human spirit, and it is on this note that the "autobiographical" ends: "Carry on boys, and continue like hell!" The fantastic dream sequence while the lion is munching a steak off his chest reveals all Hatterr's fears and hopeless aspirations to fame and glory,<sup>49</sup> but he never lets them crush him completely—in contrast to Raja Rao's hero who succumbs so easily (the robust Hatterr is to be contrasted with the consumptive Rama). Only on his eviction from the Sahibs' Club does Hatterr momentarily contemplate suicide. But Desani wants the novel to be seen with a further dimension. The transmutation of nature into art is not enough. If life is merely restless "contrast" (Hatterr's repeated summing up) and not Truth,<sup>50</sup>

Here then is the point of 'Indian' insight into the transcendental dimension (beyond Heaven and Hell and contrast), which led Desani (though it did not lead Hatterr) to spend fourteen years in monasteries in India, Burma and Japan, before finally joining Raja Rao at Austin spreading oriental light at the very heart of Western darkness. For whereas in the post-Renaissance West the artist is our supreme hero, in India it is still the guru, and the mere manipulation of words can only remain at the level of play.

<sup>1</sup> *The Banasthali Patrika*, No. 12 (January 1969), p.

<sup>2</sup> Entry on "Indian poetry in English" contributed to *The Concise 'encyclopaedia of English and American Poets and Poetry* (London, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> P. Lal often stresses this theme: see for instance the discussion in his *Writers Workshop Miscellany 2*, p. 16; more recently it has been taken up by *The Banasthali Patrika* of Rajasthan, in the special number on Indo-English Literature cited above, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *A Handful of Rice* (Delhi, 1966), p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Mulk Raj Anand, *Coolie* (Harmondsworth, 1945),

<sup>6</sup> *The Financial Expert* (New York, 1959), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> *The Sweet Vendor* (London, 1967), p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Published in translation by the Sahitya Akademi (New Delhi,

<sup>10</sup> *The Serpent and the Rope* (London, 1960), p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 397.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> P. 51.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77-79.



*Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

P. 339.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 357-358.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176; cf. pp. 383-384 or 102-103 etc.

<sup>22</sup> *National Identity: Papers Delivered at the Commonw Conference, Brisbane 1968* (London, 1970), pp. 160-161.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the letter he writes to Madeleine, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-196.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.

<sup>28</sup> *All About H. Hatterr* (Lon

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157 or :

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> As Banerrji

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> As he told me in conversation.

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172-179.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-94.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 285-286, referring back to pp. 132-134.

As men and writers Tolstoy and Kafka would at first seem to defy comparison. The one, an aristocrat with a full-blooded sensuous apprehension of life of whose writing a critic has remarked with forgivable cleverness that "if life could write, it would write like Leo Tolstoy."<sup>5</sup> The other a middle-class white-collar worker, an invalid and a neurotic, who had the uncanny gift of simultaneously portraying reality with loving accuracy and subjecting it to dissolution. Kafka once wrote that he wished to achieve a representation of life, "in which life while still retaining its natural full-bodied rise and fall, would simultaneously be recognized no less clearly as a nothing, a dream, a dim hovering" ("in der das Leben zwar sein natürliches schweres Fallen und Steigen bewahre, aber gleichzeitig mit nicht minderer Deutlichkeit als ein Nichts, als ein Traum, als ein Schweben"). Yet despite these all-too briefly summarized differences, we must not forget that (during the most crucial turning point in his life Tolstoy descended from his Olympian heights, to the underworld of existential metaphysical angst. In his autobiographical *The Memoirs of a Madman* he relates how suddenly one day in a hotel he had a fit of terrifying moral and spiritual nausea in which life's meaning became reduced to the narrow dimensions and the colours of the hotel room. "Always the same horror: red, white, and square." During his second attack he was spiritually sickened and suffocated as Joseph K. is in *The Trial* by the dim light and oppressive air of corridors. Out of this metaphysical anguish Tolstoy created two companion masterpieces, *The Death of Ivan Ilych* and *Master and Man* which bear a striking resemblance in structure, theme and the use of motifs and symbols to Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and *The Trial* (*Die Verwandlung* and *Der Prozess*).

In all these works the protagonist is an utterly social creature, careerist, an anonymous product of a quantitative urban civilization. Suddenly one day he is jolted out of his routine life and plunged into a vortex of insecurity, anguish and fear, in which he is forced to plumb the grounds of his very existence. In the course of time he arrives at a moral-cum-metaphysical recognition or realization ("Erkenntnis") which is simultaneous with death. Kafka's existential aphorism, "in the moment of death man probably surveys his whole life. For the first time—and for the last time" applies equally well to Tolstoy's quasi-Christian works.<sup>1</sup>

[Tolstoy and Kafka focus on similar dehumanizing factors in the lives of their representative characters. Routine official work or business, through which they wield and taste power, monopolizes their energies and encroaches on their private lives. Ivan Ilych is a highly placed magistrate who after his marriage, owing to the, for him, arbitrary emotional demands made on him by his pregnant wife, which disturb the equable tenor of his social life, seeks refuge more and more in the well-regulated world of his official duties. In the same way that he sterilizes human considerations in the cases brought before him, reducing them to brilliant forensic arguments on paper, he eliminates all human intercourse as husband and father from his family life, restricting their functions to those of a social appendage and practical convenience. What Ilych enjoys most about his work is the power he has over the destiny of others, which he exercises, not as a tyrant—he is too well-mannered for that—but through his virtuosity in controlling the degree of human feelings which he allows in his official relationships. In *Master and Man*, Vasili Andreivich Brekhunov's "sole aim, meaning, pleasure and pride [in] life" is how to make money. On Christmas day when he should be with his wife and son he rushes off in inclement weather to bargain for a grove which is going cheaply. His business habits have grown so ingrown that when he altercationates with his unloved wife he "compressed his lips unnaturally, as he usually did when speaking to buyers and sellers." Tolstoy conveys Brekhunov's sense of overlordship in the opening scene when he emerges on to the high porch of his own house wadded in two fur-lined coats, crunching the snow with his leather-soled felt boots, as he breezily blows cigarette smoke through his moustache.

In *The Trial* Joseph K., as he haughtily informs the examining magistrate who has mistaken him for a house-painter, "the junior manager of a large bank" ("erster Prokurist einer grossen Bank"), where he works till nine every evening. His challenge to the courts to arrest him in the bank where he is (he thinks) shielded by a panoply of telephones and a bodyguard of office boys, officials and clients, smacks almost of paranoia. Even his leisure hours are partly taken up by walks with bank clerks and drives or dinners with his manager. Hlch's regulation of his family roles and Brekhunov's neglect of them are taken to their logical conclusion in the inveterate bachelorhood of Kafka's heroes. The implication is that both Joseph K. and Gregor Samsa suffer from a paralysis of emotions and will, which makes it impossible for them to enter into any such binding human relationship. Instead K. resorts once a week to a cabaret dancer called Elsa who always receives her customers from her bed as if she were an invalid. Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* is a commercial traveller. His placating remarks to the first clerk, "I couldn't live without travelling" ("ich könnte ohne das Reisen nicht leben"), contains a great deal of truth. His irregular life scurrying from one hotel to another is described by Gregor himself as "a life of casual acquaintances that are always new and never become intimate friends" ("ein immer wechselnder, nie andauernder, nie herzlich werdender menschlicher Verkehr"). Even his rare fleeting relationships with women seem to have been determined by his hectic travelling. And when he does come home he continues to live as if in a hotel pouring over time-tables with his doors locked from the inside. Although his family seem to take him and his money for granted, there is some evidence that by usurping his father's position in the family, Gregor has enjoyed if not exploited the power which has devolved on him.

All the four characters are slaves to their clocks or watches, symbols of the mechanical regularity of their lives. They all have their daily routine precisely chalked out for them. Hlch collects clocks and watches, on one of which hangs a medallion with the ambiguous inscription, *respice finem* ("think upon or provide for the end"). For Brekhunov time is money, literally, since his watch is expensive, and metaphorically, as when he tries to forestall the other bidders by getting to the grove first. Joseph K.'s life is totally encased by routine, both his and other

people's (e.g. Elsa's).<sup>1</sup> Finally Gregor Jamsa is the most cruelly shackled to time. The hypnotized concentration with which he seems to see the minute hand literally moving—"It was half past six and the hands were quietly moving on, it was even past the half hour, it was getting on for a quarter to seven ("es war halb sieben Uhr und die Zeiger gingen ruhig vorwärts, es war sogar halb vorüber, es näherte sich schon drei Viertel")—gives the impression that his very being is one with the alarm clock.

The material world has dehumanized their inner beings. Tolstoy's criticism of his characters' attachment to money and possessions is harsh. The only serious contretemps in Ilych's life has been, not the collapse of his marriage, but his failure to get a post with a higher salary. For Brekhunov even his son's heir, is a possession, like his two taverns and flour-mill. The materialism of Kafka's characters is not half so gross, but all the more ineradicable for that. The attachment in Kafka's work—unconscious but intimate—is not to luxury goods, but to such everyday things as chairs and beds and breakfasts and shirts.

Tolstoy's and Kafka's protagonists are comparable not by coincidence but because they are representative products of two phases of civilization which overlap. With the exception of Brekhunov they are the faceless, rootless automatons of a conformist, positivist civilization. As Marx pointed out, the advantages of progress are paid for by the loss of character. In this civilization the unimpeachably unexceptional is the norm as Tolstoy remarks of Ilych: "Ivan Ilych's life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible." I have said Brekhunov is something of an exception. Although he may be a potential urban entrepreneur who, having rejected the pieties of a truly feudal community, has become infected by urban social snobbery, at the time of the story he is a landlord in the country, a self-made man, engaged in private enterprise. This is why Brekhunov stands out in relief as a personality more than the others. Yet as already implied he has the requisite iron in the soul to qualify as an apt target for the intrusion of metaphysical anguish. Leaving out Brekhunov, there are sociological differences—of degree, rather than quality—between Ilych and the two Kafka heroes. In brief the social ambience of Kafka's heroes is considerably more dehumanized, strictly speaking, than that of Tolstoy's figures. Whereas Ilych lives in

network of extremely superficial ties. Joseph K. and Gregor Samsa live in a void of human relationships. I have already noted how the hollowness of marriage in Tolstoy is pushed to ingrown bachelorhood in Kafka. Their relationship to their work is also different. K. and Gregor are cogs in a machine (the former a much larger one), slaves to routine and their respective organization's profit motive ("a season of the year for doing no business at all that does not exist"—"eine Jahreszeit, um keine Geschäfte zu machen, gibt es überhaupt nicht"), says the first clerk in *The Metamorphosis*. Underlying their outwardly calm and self-confident exterior, bred of success, lurk insecurity and anxiety (much greater in Gregor's case) arising out of competitiveness and the tyrannical demands of their organizations. The institution Ilych works for does not seem to be oppressive, and he seems to lead a more leisurely existence, less subject to the neurotic pressures of a career. The difference boils down to that between the subhuman existence of a pleasure-loving, aristocratic, official class who seem (but only seem) to lead a freer and more variegated life, and the totally restricted, blank lives of the small, lost middle class white-collar workers of a big city. It is arguable that Ilych's alienation, when he becomes aware of it, is more tormenting, but that of Kafka's heroes is certainly more hopeless.

The unruffled and predictable course of the lives of these characters is suddenly shattered by the intrusion of an unpredictable and irrational force. Ilych is struck down by a mysterious and incurable disease; Brekhunov and his servant Nikita are caught in a violent snow-storm; Joseph K. wakes up one morning and finds himself under arrest for no ostensible reason by an unknown court; and Gregor Samsa also wakes up one morning and finds himself transformed into a huge insect. Although the events in Tolstoy's works are inherently mysterious—Ilych's disease is incurable and defies diagnosis, while any fierce natural phenomenon is awesome—they still belong to the world of natural laws. (I shall need to qualify this later with respect to *The Death of Ivan Ilych*.) Kafka's catastrophes, however, are fantastic, although the scrupulous realism that governs the narrative seems to assimilate the fantastic into the matter of fact. In this combination of the dream-like and the real we are faced with an originality of fictional technique which makes interpretation extraordinarily difficult.

By definition calamities are arbitrary. Are these events, therefore *données*, like Leontes' jealousy or Iago's persecution, without any anterior explanations, but to be accepted for what a writer can make of them? This is certainly true to some extent—it is the *prospective* significance of these events that is most important. Yet in the context of the stories, although these catastrophes can never ultimately be accounted for, they do have a *retrospective* significance in the moral connection—whether realistic or symbolic—which both writers make between the catastrophe, and the character and past lives of their heroes. So, Brekhunov is trapped in a snow-storm because of his greed; twice Nikita and Mukhorty, his horse, return him to the safe haven of Grishkino, but on each occasion so avid is his desire to buy the grove cheaply that he resumes his journey. With Gregor Samsa the link is *symbolically moral*: his harassed life, as a commercial traveller, utterly thick-skinned about the deeper necessities of life, scurrying crazily from one customer to another, is mirrored in his transformation into a hard-carapaced insect, whose *raison d'être* seems to lie in frantic and haphazard crawling. Joseph K.'s guilt precedes and instigates his arrest. As one of the warders remarks, "Our officials... never go hunting for crime in the populace, but, as the Law decrees, are drawn towards the guilty and must then send out us warders" ("Unsere Behörde... sucht doch nicht etwa die Schuld in der Bevölkerung, sondern wird, wie es in Gesetz heisst, von der Schuld angezogen und muss uns Wächter ausschicken"). So on one level the court is the symbolic projection of K.'s alter ego calling his guilty self to judgment. In terms of technique we have in Kafka what is called a literal symbol. An English critic has this to say about the meaning and function of this 'shock tactic':

The subject of [Kafka's] writing is not the 'external world' but the personal sufferings, longings, questionings, hopes and fears of the individual. Such private experiences cannot be conveyed, he believes, by any method of explicit comparison, by asserting—for example—that Gregor Samsa felt like an insect. On the contrary, Samsa must be turned into a literal insect, so that the insect-fact may provoke in us, directly the feelings which gave rise to the insect-metaphor.<sup>1</sup>

In *The Death of Ivan Ilych* Tolstoy hovers uneasily between

the realistically moral and the symbolically moral connections, or in terms of technique between realism and the literal symbol. It is while Ilych is climbing a ladder (of professional and material progress) to hang up his elegant curtains, that he sustains his fatal injury. On closer scrutiny, however, as Philip Rahv notes, "the disease which lays Ilych low gradually loses its verisimilitude, until finally it takes on the form of an occult visitation,"<sup>1</sup> similar to the intrusion of strange powers in Kafka. Here the intruder is Death; Ivan Ilych does not die of a disease, he dies of Death. The purposes of Tolstoy's story exact the suspension of the fantastic since Ilych must be confronted with an ineluctable force which totally excludes his rational mind, as a disease would not have done. We see Tolstoy working towards a literal symbol when he makes Ilych reflect: "I was going up in public opinion, but to the same extent life was ebbing away from me. And now it is all done and there is only death." For most of his life Ilych was dying metaphorically, now he is visited by literal, mysterious Death. But the naturalistic and the symbolic cannot be reconciled. Tolstoy's dilemma is that in the context of his realistic fiction he must, incongruously enough, give a realistic cause for an occult visitation. As a result the window knob against which Ilych hurt himself merely becomes a pretext for an inherently inexplicable intrusion. Where Tolstoy's naturalism breaks down and his symbolism starts to bud, Kafka's symbolism flowers. He dispenses frankly with naturalistic causes and lands us *in res media* of a mysterious world which he goes on to develop with uncompromising realism.

The four protagonists are abruptly removed from their respectable, adjusted lives and plunged into the classic existential crisis of intensified dehumanization, of "fear and trembling" before a suddenly meaningless and hostile universe. They find themselves imprisoned in a forcing-house of alienation, in many ways an extension, distortion and heightening of their former condition, with the difference that since the alienation is imposed from outside they become acutely conscious of it. This is parabolically illustrated by Gregor's situation: as a travelling salesman, even at home, he used voluntarily to lock himself up from the inside; but when his family lock him in as a beetle from the outside, he becomes desperately aware of his imprisonment and tries several times to re-enter the human circle, to which in fact he had never properly belonged.



✓The obverse and paradoxical side of this alienation is that if to be human is what Ilych and the others were previously, then *de*-humanization is in fact spiritualization or true humanization. When Ilych was a distinguished judge and Gregor Samsa a conscientious travelling salesman they led subhuman lives; on becoming an invalid howling with pain like an animal and a repulsive, emaciated beetle respectively, they attain their true humanity. Suffering consciousness of their terrible predicament humanizes them leading them to a saving spiritual recognition.

Rarely have two writers stripped humanity in the pride of its mediocrity savagely of its self-importance, comforting certainties and material props. Each protagonist's connection with his normal routine, other people and the stable physical world, including his own body, is violently severed. He is reduced to a totally isolated and terribly lonely cipher in the grips of metaphysical despair.;

Ilych finds his family and the world paying him back in his own coin. His wife and daughter systematically ignore his dumb imploring looks and . . . prefer to go to the theatre. (His daughter commonly sits at his bedside with her hat on.) Ilych's doctor looks at the once powerful judge sternly over his spectacles, ignores the real human issue of life and death, instead reducing his case to a brilliant medical diagnosis, albeit a provisional one. In fact the whole of society degrades "the awful, terrible act of his dying . . . to the level of a casual, unpleasant and almost indecorous incident (as if someone had entered a drawing-room diffusing an unpleasant odour)." Even his precious material world now begins to plague him: a vase or a cushion slightly out of place irritates him to distraction.

The world rejects Ilych, but he also becomes alienated from the world. He hates people for their casual pity which turns him into an object outside their consciousness. He resents their vitality, health and social merriment, but at the same time is filled with *Schadenfreude* at their benighted ignorance of their own mortality. His "gnawing, unmitigated, agonizing pain" and his even more unbearable mental torments seal him up in his private inferno.

The most powerful image of Ilych's estrangement (an image found in the other works as well) is that of imprisonment. In his case it is an inevitable consequence of his invalidism. The very sameness of his cherished furniture impresses on him the

very sameness of his pain, taking on the very colour of his illness. The passage of time which had so neatly regulated his life also torments him with its meaningless, unending monotony ("whether it was morning or evening, Friday or Sunday, made no difference, it was all just the same"). His horizon becomes restricted to the blank wall, later to the back of the sofa and finally blinded with pain to his inner purgatorial world. In this prison of a room Ilych suffers the most agonizing form of isolation and loneliness, "a loneliness in the midst of a populous town and surrounded by numerous acquaintances and relations, but that yet could not have been more complete anywhere—either at the bottom of the sea or under the earth.

Ilych's dehumanization is also physical—his "strong", "agile" body of which he had been so proud, bludgeoned by pain, wastes away. He develops an aversion for food, for the sustenance of his vital life: in fact the queer taste aroused in his mouth by food always reminds him of death. Interestingly enough Tolstoy's repeated references to food give it a symbolic function (Ivan Ilych develops a "distaste" for his life) which resembles the symbol of nourishment in *The Metamorphosis*, although in the latter it is far more fully worked out and central to the *novella*.

In *Master and Man* the snow-storm imprisons Brekhunov by depriving him of the use of his senses and means of locomotion. On the other hand Brekhunov rejects humanity despite two warnings and is responsible on all three occasions, due to his avarice or brash cocksureness, of losing the way. Even his final utter loneliness in the waste of snow, plunging after Mukhorty, haunted by the vision of the desperately tossed wormwood, portents of the senselessness of the universe, is caused by his selfishness and egotism. He rode off alone because he was convinced that his life was worth saving at the expense of Nikita's.

The storm does not merely cut Brekhunov off physically from humanity, but as a ferocious, uncontrollable, chaotic force it opposes everything for which Brekhunov stands: reason, purposiveness, materialism and pride. Like the echoing caves in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* the storm blurs distinctions, reduces quantity to nothingness, wipes out familiar landmarks, levels classes (or races) and makes a plaything of man's pretensions. Brekhunov who is so clear-sighted is blinded by the snow or has optical illusions; the man who stands so firmly and moves so purposively flounders in the snow and goes round in circles;

the merchant for whom time is money finds that time is oppressively static and yet unending, and the positivist who takes the everyday world for granted is terrified by the moaning willow trees and the flapping of a handkerchief.

Brekhunov's body also is deprived of its vital life. It is not ravaged by pain or wasted away by disease, but penetrated by the cold and frozen as hard as iron.

Gregor Samsa's dehumanization is literal—he becomes an insect. As such he acquires an intimate physical knowledge of "untouchability". His sister lifts up Gregor's barely touched bowl of milk with a rag, brings water back in the same bowl, obviously now discarded from the family crockery, and sweeps up the remaining food, including what Gregor has not touched, with a broom. Later she pushes in the food with her foot and sweeps it up without looking to see whether Gregor has touched it. At the end to get Gregor finally off her conscience she disowns this "creature" ("Untier") as her brother, and urges her parent, "to get rid off it" ("esloszuwerden"). Although very little is said about Gregor's feelings, the implication is strong that his sister's revulsion from him is contagious; it makes him squirm with self-disgust. With his father on the other hand Gregor experiences the terror of brutal alienation, as when his father pursues him round the room bombarding him with apples: "... he lifted his feet uncommonly high, and Gregor was dumb-founded at the enormous size of his shoe soles" ("immerhin hob er die Füße ungewöhnlich hoch, und Gregor staunte über die Riesengrösse seiner Stiefelsohlen").

Imprisoned in his bedroom Gregor suffers alternately from claustrophobia and a kind of vertical agoraphobia as he gazes up at the high (for him) overarching walls. The world closes in upon him as his vision dims and he gradually loses sight of the hospital opposite until, if it were not for his knowledge that he lived in a busy part of the town, "he might have believed that this window gave on a desert waste where grey sky and grey land blended indistinguishably into each other" ("hätte er glauben können, von seinem Fenster aus in eine Einöde zu schauen, in welcher der graue Himmel und die graue Erde ununterscheidbar sich vereinigten"). (Here one is strongly reminded of the desert waste of snow—"the line where sky and earth met could not be seen"—which annihilates Brekhunov's hold on life.) Whenever his sister comes into his room Gregor

arts under the sofa and covers himself well up with a sheet, thus confining himself to a cell within a cell. In this prison also time seems to have stopped (the alarm clock is never mentioned again) and yet oppresses with its monotony. The desolation of Gregor's position is gradually intensified. First his cherished furniture, which is his last link with his "human past" ("menschlichen Vergangenheit"), is removed to give him room to crawl freely and senselessly. Then—quite in contradiction to the purpose of the removal of the furniture—Gregor has to suffer the conversion of his room into both a junkroom and a refuse-dump. So Gregor has to pass from the negative alienation of emptiness to the positive, degrading alienation of having to live among things that bear the stigma of human rejection and disgust. Almost as an act of masochistic degradation Gregor takes to crawling through all the junk and filth and causes a hollow rumpus. Although he finds in this pastime a hideous and grotesque pleasure, at the end he collapses, "sad and weary to death" ("zum Sterben müde und traurig"). This room becomes an apt symbol of Gregor's metaphysical hell.

After a short period in which Gregor exults in the new-found potentialities of his insect body, he wearies of it. He begins to lose his appetite and eventually stops eating. Nor can he sleep although most of the time towards the end he lies dormant in a corner. His body wastes away also because of the wounds he has received from his father especially the incurable one with the rotting apple lodged in it. At the end covered with fluff and hair and pieces of food he is indistinguishable from the rubbish in his room.

In *The Trial* the motif of imprisonment which we have traced in the other books takes on a legal dimension and is used as a literal symbol far more powerfully than in the other works. Joseph K. does not merely *feel* himself under arrest and imprisoned, his arrest and imprisonment are presented to us as plain, empirical facts. But strangely enough, as if to de-fuse the concreteness of the literal symbol, Joseph K. unlike the others is not *physically* incarcerated, since he is completely free to pursue his normal occupations. Yet paradoxically this imprisonment, unlike that of the others, is *totally* comprehensive and restrictive because the world or his whole life becomes his prison. (K.'s disdainful remark to the Inspector that since being under arrest makes no difference to his life, it was hardly

necessary to tell him about it, is in retrospect found to be diametrically opposed to the truth.) To quote a German critic, "... wherever K. is he is being tried. As he walks along the road people laugh above him at windows, when he is sitting in his office brooding over his case, the assistant director steps laughing into the room, and when he comes home in the evenings he imagines there's a guard stationed outside his house."<sup>2</sup> Apart from the ubiquitousness of the arrest what is most insidious about it is that by releasing the body it constrains the mind as if in a vice. If he had been put into prison his normal life would merely have been put into cold storage; but here the prison comes to him and gradually incapacitates him for normal life. We remember how Ilych was prevented from leading his routine existence by that "matter of importance" which had to be seen to. Similarly Joseph K. becomes swiftly absorbed in his matter of importance. For instance just a few days after his contemptuous dismissal of the court, when the court rings him up to fix the date of the first hearing, we find him behaving like a somnambulist in front of the assistant director. This second intrusion, this time in the fortress of his formulaistic, conventional life, his office, so overwhelms him that he stands lost in thought in the way of the assistant manager, who wants to use the phone. Rather brusquely he turns down a conciliatory invitation to a party from the latter (his most dangerous rival), remains plunged in thought nearby as the assistant manager makes his call, is frightened out of his wits as the phone is hung up, and commits the *faux pas* of making his Sunday appointment (at the court) for which he has just refused the assistant manager's invitation, sound unimportant. By Chapter 7 Joseph K. is totally estranged from every other thought: "The thought of his case never left him now" ("Der Gedanke an den Prozess verliess ihn nicht mehr").

Joseph K.'s physical world—that comforting, stable physical world of his prosaic existence—is continually subjected to a distortion of perspective. Instead of the emaciation or the freezing of the body, we have in this novel an acute maladjustment between the hero and his material world. Normally this takes the form of a dreamlike unreality as if the world were slightly askew. K. finds that Frau Grubach's room is unaccountably larger (he later realizes that this is due to the removal of the chairs, those comforting supports of life); he is shocked to

recognize the three bank employees in the unexpected surroundings of Fräulein Bürstner's room; nor does he notice the departure of the warders. At times the distortion is that of a nightmare as when at the end of his first hearing his euphoria is shattered by the terrifying realization that the apparently venerable, impartial jurors are all in fact degenerate, bestial court officials with beards stiff and brittle like bunches of claws. This sudden transformation of the human to the animal is not unusual—another instance is the web of skin between Leni's fingers. However K.'s most violent maladjustment to the physical world is caused by the stuffy atmosphere of the court offices: "He felt as if he were seasick. He felt he was on a ship rolling in heavy seas" ("Er war wie seekrank. Er glaubte auf einem Schiff zu sein, das sich in schwerem Seegang befand"). The deformity of the physical world by continually upsetting K.'s equilibrium becomes a compelling symbol of K.'s maladjustment to himself and the universe, of his frustration, moral and spiritual nausea, fear, and anguish.

Apart from the dreamlike distortion of the familiar, Joseph K. suffers a more intimate physical and emotional, as distinct from the psychic, form of alienation, when he finds a strange uncouth man eating up *his* breakfast, lifting *his* cup of tea to his lips, dipping *his* buttered bread into *his* honey pot, fingering and coveting *his* shirts and underclothes (as if intending to strip him on the spot) and continually humping *their* fat bellies against *his* body with friendly insolence. No writer has been able to imply so disturbingly such a private sense of outrage and affront.

Joseph K.'s arrest by bringing to the surface his guilt and insecurity obsessively drives him to establish contact with other people not just to justify his innocence but also to dispel his sense of loneliness. But on each occasion he is rebuffed. Both the Inspector and Frau Grubach fail to grasp his outstretched hand, the latter overlooking it in her agitation, the former reducing it to an object by his indifferent stare. Fräulein Bürstner rejects his sexual and emotional appeal, collapsing into a resigned, unreceptive inanimate object in his hands as he succeeds in kissing her. This together with his failure to address her intimately since he does not know her first name, widens the very gulf between them that he tries to close with his desperate embrace. Although other women succumb to him he

succeeds  
them.

I have tried to trace the progressive alienation in the works under discussion by focusing on three main areas: the human community, the material world and the motif or literal symbol of imprisonment. Each protagonist's crisis of alienation is comprehensive and extreme. Each suffers unmitigated loneliness, humiliating helplessness and abject terror. Yet distinctions need to be drawn. Kafka does not have Tolstoy's intense "imagination of mortality". The latter whittles his heroes to insignificance by confronting them with death, and hence with their past lives and the human condition. Kafka's strategy to confront his heroes *directly* with their past lives and their human condition, whether it is in the form of "a summary court in perpetual session" or a repulsive, helpless beetle. Although the intensity of dehumanization is extreme in all the works, Kafka pushes his heroes' predicament to the uttermost limits of degradation and vertiginous anguish. Ivan Ilych may be divested of all human dignity and die yelping like an animal caught in a trap, yet he is still recognizably Ivan Ilych, a human being. Although a victim he struggles consciously and desperately to make moral and metaphysical choices. Gregor Samsa and Joseph K. are far more passive. The former at the end lies totally inert in a corner of the room and after his death is swept up as offal. Joseph K. becomes less and less a victim of his own delusions or bad faith, and more and more a slave to his own anguish and guilt.

The obverse paradoxical side of dehumanization is, as I have pointed out, spiritualization. All the characters experience an inner transformation culminating in a realization or recognition. They discover or forge an authentic new identity out of the nothingness to which they are reduced. *The Trial*, partly due to its incompleteness and controversial structure does not lend itself so easily to this pattern, although there is some evidence of a similar development and culmination. However, the transformation (or dehumanization) and realization do not take place without some resistance. Each drowning hero clutches at every straw of their conventional lives. In all the works, this resistance takes three forms: there is an attempt to resume normal life, the primacy of reason is asserted to combat the growing uneasiness, and recourse is had to imposing insti-

tutions or  
human ills.

At the beginning of his illness Ilych spends all his time in "trying to get back into the former current of thought that had once screened the thought of death from him." He erects a number of such screens: his official work, the re-arrangement of furniture, quarrels with his wife and even holy communion. But all in vain. Brekhunov boosts his morale by smoking and dwelling on the thoughts of his possessions and his life-history as a self-made man. Gregor Samsa several times resolves to get up, get dressed and catch the next train, while Joseph K. goes to work regularly, but pointlessly, since he spends most of the time brooding over his case.

Ilych's reason resists the moral recognition of the futility of his past life. Brekhunov tries desperately to reason himself out of fear (that for instance the terrifying noise is only Mukhorty's neigh) and into calm. In Gregor Samsa's case reason is from the beginning futile; there is only scope for wish-fulfilment and desperate bids to join or cling on to humanity. Joseph K. opposes his growing insecurity with a battery of reasons which are usually simultaneously betrayals. Why should he commit suicide? "...to give him courage...as precaution, for the improbable contingency that it might be needed" ("sich Mut zu machen... aus Vorsicht für den unwahrscheinlichen Fall, dass es nötig sein sollte"). Having a legal turn of mind—he is almost an advocate—he tries to baffle the warders with logical qualifications and nuances: "but on the other hand" ("andererseits"), "I argue this from the fact that" ("ich folgere das daraus dass"), and "the real question is to know" ("die Hauptfrage ist..."). Medicine, law and religion have this in common: they are authoritative institutions confident in their ability to solve human problems by trite rational (in fact pseudo-rational) precepts. This applies equally to the church in that it dispenses prescriptions for salvation which sound perfectly rational. There is little difference between medical, legal and religious nostrums. Ilych resorts to a tribe of distinguished doctors who all disagree on the diagnosis, Brekhunov in his final loneliness appeals to Holy Father Nicholas, but realizes that "there was and could be no connection between those candles and services and his present disastrous plight." Even Gregor Samsa at first seems to pin his hopes on a "cure", as his mother more naively does. This is



suggested by the references to the doctor and the hospital opposite Gregor's window. Tolstoy makes the application of medicine to Ilych's case seem absurd; in Gregor's case it is grotesquely incongruous.<sup>1</sup> Finally Joseph K. takes refuge from the truth of his life by putting his faith in the legal constitution of his country, the warders' unofficial appearance, his identification papers, and in the lawyers and court officials whom he hires to fight his case.

Although the process of dehumanization is at the same time negative and positive, the experience and revelation in which it climaxes is strongly positive (except in *The Trial*). This experience is a reversal of the negative side of dehumanization in that the body ceases to be a burden and the protagonist achieves a fusion with humanity. I shall first discuss this climactic recognition and the psychological developments leading up to it in all the works except *The Trial*, which I shall treat separately.

In Ilych the psychological process is a conscious moral and spiritual quest for the meaning of life. This quest truly begins when he realizes that his problem is one of life and death, not one of a floating kidney. As so often in Tolstoy a crucial inner change is precipitated in sleep (see also *The Memoirs of a Madman*) and sometimes in a dream; the hero wakes up a different man. We find the same thing in Kafka: the hero wakes up one morning after uneasy dreams to a new world, paradoxically a world of nightmare. The two important discoveries Ilych makes at the threshold of death (although the second is not formulated as such but takes the form of an exaltation) are that his past life was inauthentic and that salvation lies in touch and love. When his hand falls on his son's head he is filled with tenderness and compassion for the family, even for his hated wife, and a radiant spiritual joy. He still feels the pain but tells himself, "Let the pain be." He has found spiritual life in physical death.

In Brekhunov there is no conscious quest, the transformation being spontaneous. The destruction of his former personality takes place in the desert waste of snow in which the tossed wormwood impresses on him the absurdity of his existence. Reconstruction begins when he rejoins the human circle (Mukhorty is more human than Brekhunov was) which with its healing touch, to which he is now receptive, renders true sanity and meaning to life. Impulsively but deliberately, responding

humanely for the first time in his life to another person's suffering he lies down on Nikita. His metaphysical terrors vanish: he no longer hears the senseless wailing of the wind but the pulse of Nikita's breathing. The "glowing warmth" of touch in turn stirs his humanity powerfully, and fills him with "a strange and solemn tenderness" and an awesome joy. As a result although his body freezes stiff, "he was surprised but not at all disturbed." His discoveries about life—that love brings redemption ("Nikita is alive, so I too am alive") and that the falsity of his former life had concealed his real self—come as a spontaneous revelation. They do not have to be as in Ilych's case consciously wrested from the turmoil of anguished doubts.

[Gregor Samsa's realization is even more "spontaneous" an unwilling than Brekhunov's, but it is the spontaneity of inertness. Gregor's habituation to every stage of the dehumanization induces in him total apathy and indifference to humanity. He prefers to lie vegetating in a dark corner of the room than avail himself of the door left open by his family. It is in this condition of physical (he is dying of starvation and his wounds) and mental torpor that he is hypnotically drawn by the music of his sister's violin. "Was he an animal, when music had such an effect upon him? He felt as if the way were opening before him to the unknown nourishment he craved" ("War er ein Tier, da ihn Musik so ergriß? Ihm war, als zeige sich ihm der Weg zu der ersehnten unbekannten Nahrung"). This powerful spiritual experience—Gregor is yearning for something absolute and unknown beyond the human community—arouses "tenderness and love" ("Rührung und Liebe") in him for his family. In Ilych and Brekhunov the process had been the opposite it will be remembered: human love had first grown out of touch and then assumed a spiritual dimension. Kafka probably felt a stronger pull towards a spiritual reality, however anguished and frustrating his efforts to grasp it may have been, than Tolstoy; certainly he felt that viable human relationships were exceptionally difficult.

The paradoxical conclusion of these three works—that spiritual life is gained from physical death—is of course a corollary to the central paradox of dehumanization being one with humanization. In each work this is summed up and clinched in a paradoxical image or metaphor which, having its origin earlier in the book, helps to give continuity and coherence to the theme

and structure. In *The Death of Ivan Ilych* the metaphor is one of darkness and light, with its Christian overtones. At the bottom of the black sack of death there is light: "In place of death, there was light." Earlier in the book Ilych had thought of his past as a gradual ebbing out of life or light and a streaming in of darkness. Surprisingly, we have suggestions of the same metaphor in *The Metamorphosis*. Just before Gregor dies lying on the floor of the room to which the light of the streetlamp does not penetrate, remembering his family with tenderness, he sees the beginnings of dawn outside his window. And in both writers what is important is the light of authentic life, not that of the streetlamp or the candle. The dominant metaphor, however in *The Metamorphosis*, is the animal-human paradox. Representative human beings such as the three prim and proper lodgers and Gregor's family turn out to be basically animals, while Gregor, the beetle, is powerfully attracted to a spiritual reality, the hall ark of the truly human. As Gregor watches the three lodgers eat he hears "the sound of their masticating teeth, as if this were a sign to Gregor that one needed teeth, in order to eat, and that with toothless jaws even of the finest make one could do nothing. 'I'm hungry enough,' said Gregor sadly to himself, 'but not for that kind of food.'" Animal jaws cannot sustain animal existence, you need human teeth to do that. Gregor has developed a "distaste" for ordinary human, that is animal, life; what he needs is "the unknown nourishment" as symbolized by the music. In *Master and Man* while dying on Nikita's body, Brekhunov dreams of "the white walls of his house with its iron roof with Nikita lying underneath". Here his house with its iron roof (and iron foundations), repeated references to which have been made, becomes the symbol of Brekhunov's economic and human exploitation of Nikita. When however in giving this warmth to Nikita, he freezes stiff and hard as iron, the burden of his body on Nikita comes to be a symbol of loving service.

We have seen how Kafka's vision of life in *The Metamorphosis* bears a striking resemblance to that of Tolstoy's two post-conversion works. The great Christian theme of the dichotomy between body and spirit, of spirituality achieved through asceticism, clearly underlies these works. But ultimately Kafka's vision is more desperate and bleak because he confronts us with a split world of irreconcilable extremes. Lionel Trilling

as pointed out that Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (the same I think applies to *Master and Man*) is life-affirmative in both a pagan and Christian sense. By exposing the falsity of Ilych's life Tolstoy is "trying to win us to a full acceptance of the joys of the life of this world. It is not the virtuous life that Tolstoy has in mind or the pious life—he means life in any actuality, any life that is really lived." (It should be added that Tolstoy denies in this fiction the possibility of an authentic life in an urban society.) Yet this is also Christian for, as Trilling continues, "without life there cannot be spiritual life, without the capacity for joy or delight there cannot be the conception of the happiness of salvation." Tolstoy's life-affirmation is emphasized by Gerasim and Nikita, who combine physical and spiritual vitality, and are spontaneously at one with people, animal and inanimate objects. They live by the values Ilych and Brekhunov discovered in dying. But in Kafka's *novella*, although there is a saving glimpse of a spiritual reality, and an upsurge of love, there is no indication that these are values that are or can be lived by (in the world of the story). The story strongly resists any retroactive extrapolation which might imply a viable form of life embodying Gregor's insights. It almost seems as if such insights are only possible at the lowest ebb of humanity. There is a danger, however, in stressing Gregor's fate, to overlook the ambivalence in the book. This resides in the concurrent but opposed metamorphosis of the family from their complacent, inert, dependent existence under Gregor's regime to an enforced, active, responsible and independent life after Gregor's transformation. This is symbolized in the coda by the sister's transfiguration into "a pretty girl with a good figure" ("einem schönen und üppigen Mädchen"). The effect of this on the memory of Gregor's miserable fate is almost cynically disturbing, yet there is a sense of relief in re-entering the normal healthy world of spring and fresh air and everyday human practices. This juxtaposition of the spiritual being incapacitated for normal life and the ordinary worldly individual reminds one strongly of Thomas Mann's opposition in *Tonio Kröger* between the alienated artist, conscious of death and devoted to "demonic beauty" ("der dämonischen Schönheit") and the "comfortably normal" ("Angenehm-Normale") bourgeois. But whereas in Mann a fruitful dialectical relationship between the two is posited when Tonio recognizes at the end that it is the bourgeois' love of the

human and the usual, which is capable of "making a poet out of a literary man" ("aus einem Literaten einen Dichter zu machen") in Kafka two extremes are presented ambivalently (Gregor and his family) but without any attempt to weave a dialectical commerce between them or reconcile them either in the structure of the work itself or in the mind of the protagonist. In other words the need for both body and spirit in life does not crystallize within the framework of the story. Tolstoy solves the problem of duality in a character like Gerasim, whose physical energy and health are the reflection of a spiritual vitality. On the other hand by his strong commitments, which it is true also produce the disturbing intensity of his works, he creates other dualities which impose stark simplifications on the complex fabric of life. One such is the unbridgeable opposition he creates between his two dominant positives, the child and the peasant, and his anathema, urban social life. Here again Thomas Mann, I feel, offers a more adequate representation of reality, in such a work as *Death in Venice* where he holds the instinctive and the elemental in delicate balance with bourgeois dignity and decorum.

When we come finally to *The Trial* the gulf between Tolstoy and Kafka increases: we are now in midstream of modern fiction. Joseph K.'s acknowledgment of guilt in the last chapter (which is not adequately led up to) is revealed by his readiness to go to his execution. But just when he is about to fall into Ivan Ilych's black sack of death, he has a last minute flicker of hope, on seeing someone stretching out his hand from a window opposite, that help is at hand. "Logic is doubtless unshakable but it cannot withstand a man who wants to go on living" ("Die Logik ist zwar unerschütterlich, aber einem Menschen, der leben will, widersteht sie nicht"). Due to this he does not fall into the sack of his own accord, but has to be pushed into it to eternal humiliation. Joseph K.'s confession therefore is incomplete.

But even if the confession had been complete, what would have been an acknowledgment of? We find that in Kafka man is required to confess the virtually impossible: not just to the falsity of a particular way of life (as Ilych had to) which is quite understandable, but to the wrongness of his life as such of the human condition. Joseph K. is just guilty—that is a fact. His last minute thought of resistance, therefore, without lessening his shame, arouses our sympathy.

In addition, K.'s descent into the sack is not automatic.

accompanied by a joyful realization of the values according to which a man's life should be led. He sees no light at the bottom of the sack, does not even glimpse any spiritual reality as Gregor does. In Kafka's world man must confess and die for a spiritual reality, which although it exists and is continually longed for is always obscure, imponderable and inaccessible.

A general evaluation of Kafka, especially of his *The Trial* is hazardous. But of all the judgments Georg Lukács' still strikes me as being the most adequate. Lukács says that Kafka is a distinguished writer because the chaos and angst that characterize his works, and that are the true features of the society in which he lives, are portrayed, "with such originality a naivety", with "such rare candour and honesty". As for Kafka's being a negative writer, he writes that "our horror, our fascination is the measure of the degree in which we are made more acutely conscious of our need for wholeness of personality, for a meaningful existence and world which are the highest values that determine the quality and shape of Kafka's vision". But Lukács "denies Kafka", in the words of Roy Pascal.

the full title of realist, by which he means the achievement of true and great art, because his work contains strong suggestions of allegory. Thus for instance in *The Trial* and *The Castle*, the search of the heroes may be seen to embody a deep longing for a transcendental authority, a transcendental meaning, which they preserve despite its continual frustration. For Lukács allegory lacks the element of time, history, movement and change: it abstracts the particular from the historical process, from the hard-earned profane meaningfulness of reality, and establishes it as a transcendental absolute. This means that the specific situation of the modern bourgeois intellectual is presented as if it were a universal condition *humaine*. It is significant that Lukács places against Kafka, Thomas Mann, the last of the bourgeois realists, who also embodies the Angst, the isolation of modern man in his novels. But unlike Kafka he remains resolutely of this world, he defines these features as features of a particular modern situation, a situation that is made and changed by men. Thus Mann's characters, however specific, acquire a general significance as types, not as ciphers of an absolute situation. As types of attitudes and roles characteristic of a particular situation they are not frozen into rigid attitudes, but have the power of decision, of change.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion I would like to draw some of the loose threads together. We have noted distinct similarities in structure, then, and the use of motifs and symbols in the works under discussion. We have seen how Tolstoy and Kafka share a number of basic preoccupations: radical discontent with conventional institutions, in brief with modern urban civilization; marital anguish and despair when, stripped to a cipher, he confronts an alienated, senseless world, and the experience of or striving towards a spiritual reality. There are three ways of looking at these similarities. Kafka is such an amazingly original novelist especially in his technical innovations, that there is a tendency to treat him as a literary monster or sport, an attitude which prevents a true assessment of his achievement. The 'sanctified' comparison with the central, classical realist of world literature may help us to approach him not with awe and bewilderment but with the critical intelligence we bring to bear on other authors. Conversely this comparison may help to change our critical perspective on Tolstoy: the invidious either/or Tolstoy-or-Dostoevsky choice of George Steiner-fame must be modified once we come to view Tolstoy as one of the forerunners of modern fiction.

Having said this it is important to get the emphasis right. If we do then we note that it is Tolstoy who, in the phase of civilization he portrays, and in theme and technique, is the transitional writer (a transition to modern fiction), rather than Kafka. A critic has recently summed up the general features of the imaginative world of novelists like Joyce, Kafka and Beckett as follows:

the replacement of the coherent social world of the older realists by an incoherent factuality or a pattern of sense-impressions; the disappearance of any meaningful relationship between man and his social environment; the breakdown of 'character', the disintegration of purpose and will; the isolation and alienation of man; the replacement of objective time by subjective time, the replacement of objective narrative and description by interior monologue, the breakdown of story itself, the tendency to allegory (and symbolism).<sup>6</sup>

My analysis I hope will have demonstrated how these features are present in embryo form in Tolstoy's two *novellas*. One remembers how Ilych is plagued by the intractable materialism of physical world, and how Brekhunov's world disintegrates

flurry of sense-impressions. Their personalities crumble into nothingness. The once powerful and purposeful judge and merchant are rendered impotent and purposeless. Their regulated lives are replaced by an oppressive subjective time-sequence. We are drawn more and more into the protagonist's anguished stream of consciousness. No meaningful events take place in their lives after the initial dislodgment from their normal course of life: whatever does happen to them leads them round in circles. And finally there is a more conscious use of symbols in these works, for example that of light and darkness and of the iron-roofed house.

But these features on the whole take a transitional form in Tolstoy; they are not full-fledged modern characteristics. In technique, leaving aside the symbols embedded in realism, there is evidence that the whole of each work aspires to a symbolic or parabolic status. In *The Death of Ivan Ilych* we have Ilych's mysterious bruise whereas in *The Metamorphosis* and *A Country Doctor* (in Landarzt) we have man's primal wound (in the former with a rotting apple of knowledge in it) which is "the stigma of insight". In Tolstoy we have Brekhunov floundering in vain through the snow after the shadowy form of Mukhorty, haunted by the absurdity of existence. This has a resonance of the parable of modern man's fate. In *A Country Doctor* this event is raised to the level of a conscious symbol of man's nightmarish fate in a wintry age. Thematically the protagonist's experience of chaos and angst becomes in, say, *The Trial* the very medium of the fiction, pervading the texture of the world the hero lives in. And besides in Tolstoy the chaos and angst lead to the light at the bottom of the sack; the Kafka hero is doomed to a cul-de-sac. If Ilych had not found that ray of light Tolstoy would have had to create a different kind of fictional form. He might have had to write like Kafka.



<sup>4</sup> Lionel Trilling, *The*  
p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> Roy Pascal, "Georg Lukács: The Concept of Totality", *Georg Lukács, the Man, his Work and his Ideas*, ed. G. H. R. Parkinson (London, 1970), pp. 164-168.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Hatfield, *Crisis*  
(Ithaca, 1969), p. 58.

*German Fiction*

## INTRODUCTION

1. *Calliope*.—“Tell me now, you Muses that live on Olympus, since you are goddesses and since you witness all that happens, whereas we, men, know nothing that we are not told—tell me now who were the captains and chieftains of the Danaans. . . . I am helpless as long as you, Olympian Muses, daughters of the aegis-bearing Zeus, do not awaken my memory. . . .” Thus Homer, when he is about to give the impressive survey of Agamemnon's allies.

Virgil echoes him in a similar passage. The Trojans have arrived on the shore of Latium and the poet wants to reveal the greatness and magnificence of the Italian heroes. He invokes the Muses: “O Goddesses, open wide the gates of Helicon and inspire my song. . . . You are divine, your memory is faithful, and you can awaken our memory. As to us, men, only a faint breath of the past has reached us.”<sup>12</sup>

The Muses are, in Rieu's expression, “the remembrancers”. They are the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosunē. Among them Calliope, the epic Muse, holds a privileged place. For epic poetry is essentially turned towards the past. Not that epic poetry claims to be a chronicle of past events. Its concern is not with the so-called historical past and Calliope does not offer to her devotee a list of dates and of human achievements. The past which she claims to reach transcends the fluctuations of what we call history. The human scene is too baffling to admit of a purely human explanation, however far in the past it may be sought. There is a mysterious and unknown reality which is not subject to time and which gives an unchanging pattern to the temporal. That is why Calliope is forever in quest of what

happened "in the beginning",  
its desultory course.

The language of Calliope is the language of myth. When *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines myth as a "purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons etc. and embodying popular ideas on natural phenomena etc.", it empties myth of its true significance. For a myth is much more than a "fictitious" story meant to illustrate some doctrine; it is much more than personification of natural forces. It is a symbolic form of expression trying, through action and drama, to penetrate into the unknowable. It translates into images which are at times contradictory "the fundamental experience of a divinely ordered world in which a conflict of supernatural powers and forces is immanent, the one hostile and the other beneficial to men's well-being. To fulfil its proper functions it must always be a symbolic representation of the ultimate reality, however this may be conceived and interpreted, concerning the essential meaning and facts of existence and of human destinies."<sup>3</sup> The human story in the epic is mostly "a transposition in the world of men of a vast system of mythical representations."<sup>4</sup> This is, for instance, how G. Dumézil sees in the *Mahābhārata* the epic transposition of an eschatological crisis:

... le Mahābhārata transpose en une crise presque mortelle de la lignée et de la royauté des Kuru une crise de l'histoire du monde, ce que la mythologie hindouiste appelle la "fin d'un yuga". D'abord, pendant une longue période, le Mal mène la vie dure au Bien, le persécute, a l'air de triompher. A l'heure du règlement des comptes, deux immenses armées s'assemblent et se combattent, celle des Méchants autour de Duryodhana, qui n'est autre que le démon Kali incarné, c'est-à-dire le démon du plus mauvais âge du monde et généralement de ce qu'il y a, en toute matière, de plus mauvais; celle des Bons autour des Pāṇḍava, qui sont les dieux des trois fonctions incarnés. Successivement périssent, les premiers dans la bataille et les seconds dans la surprise nocturne, tout le parentage et toute l'armée des Méchants, y compris Duryodhana, sauf trois hommes, puis toute l'armée des Bons, sauf les Pāṇḍava et deux autres hommes. Les espoirs d'une survie des Kuru se réduisent aux enfants à naître. Alors, pour l'enjeu suprême, les embryons, puis le dernier embryon, deux des héros survivants s'opposent: celui en qui est incarné le dieu destructeur qui, à chaque fin de yuga, assure l'anéantissement du monde; celui en qui est incarné le dieu sauveur qui, après la fin de chaque

yuga, assure la renaissance du monde. Chacun d'eux fait son office et, comme dans la cosmologie, Visnu refait un univers à partir des germes ou des formes qu'il a gardés en lui-même.<sup>2</sup>

Calliope herself is a myth. What does she represent symbolically? She represents the quest of a society, or, rather, of a believing community, for the community of the epic age is a community of faith. It lives its own life among other people, sustained by common hopes and pursuing its quest generation after generation. We think of the Achæan settlements in Ionia, after the Dorian invasion, of the Visquite communities in India, of the early Christian Church in the Roman Empire. Epic literature embodies a creative tradition, for, as long as the epic community is alive as a community of faith, its quest for the ultimate never stops. With each new generation, new questions arise. With the help of its spiritual leaders and bards, the community, while preserving what has been handed down by the ancestors, pursues its mythological meditation and enriches its epic patrimony. This organic growth of epic literature has too often been lost sight of. Modern individualism has approached the epic as one would approach a modern novel. We have had, at the end of the nineteenth century, endless and futile discussions on the Homeric question. Under the scrutiny of literary historians, the *Rāmāyana* has been neatly divided into the so-called original *Rāmāyana* and later accretions. But this 'critical' treatment of the epic reveals a singular lack of historical sense. The epic should be replaced in the context of its organic development. The *Rāmāyana* existed long before Vālmiki. At a certain point of its growth, there appeared, in one of the communities whose life was centred on the Rāmaic faith, a gifted saint whose poetic genius transformed the simple narrative into the *ādi-kāvya*. And after him, the *Rāmāyana* went on developing and growing, because the new generations raised new questions and sought deeper answers. If it is critically established that the *Balakāṇḍa* and the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* were not composed by Vālmiki, they are nevertheless integral parts of the *Rāmāyana*,

A few traces are still lingering here and there of the nineteenth century secular postulate according to which epic poetry would begin with the panegyric of purely human heroes and gradually endow those heroes with mythic and divine features.

Starting from that postulate, scholars try to divest the heroes of their supernatural halo and to bring them back to their human dimensions. Two separate issues are confused. The first is the possible fact that the heroes have been historical personages. This fact nobody would deny. But the second issue is quite different: did the people of the epic age ever show any literary interest in the purely historical existence of the heroes whom they celebrated? Is there any evidence, for instance, that the *Rāmāyaṇa* story ever existed in the form to which zealous critics have reduced it in their concern for 'historical' objectivity? Their story would run as follows: Once upon a time, there was a prince of the royal house of Ayodhyā whose name was Rāma. Through the cunning of his step-mother, he was banished for a time to the forest. He went into exile with his wife Sītā and his brother Lakṣmaṇa. While they were living in the forest, an aboriginal chieftain living across a lake kidnapped Sītā. With the help of friendly tribes whose totems were the monkey and the bear, Rāma rescued his wife and killed the ravisher. He returned to Ayodhyā, was crowned king and reigned happily for many years.

This Rāma is claimed by our critics to be the 'real' Rāma, as opposed to the Rāma of faith. But the real question is: has this 'real' Rāma ever been the subject of oral poetry in the early communities where the *Rāmāyaṇa* was born? Have we to imagine the members of those early communities as secular humanists enjoying a good piece of romance and adventure and being gradually mystified by crafty priests into believing that Rāma was Viṣṇu's *avatāra*? Would not this amount to a naive and uncritical transposition of the secular mentality of the nineteenth century in the completely different context of an early and primitive civilization? Even in the case of the early Christians the attempt to represent them as admirers of a purely human Christ, gradually induced by over-enthusiastic disciples to endow him with divine attributes has proved futile. As the Christ of faith was for them, from the beginning, the *real* Christ, so also, in the early communities singing the praises of Rāma, the Rāma of faith was the only Rāma they ever cared to recognize and to honour. No doubt, there were priests and saints and bards in those early communities and, in their hands, myths served the purpose of "stabilizing the established order both in nature and society, of confirming belief

of vouching for the efficacy of the cults and of maintaining traditional behaviour and status by means of supernatural sanctions and precedents."<sup>6</sup> But they themselves were living members of the communities, and when they spoke, they spoke "not only in virtue of their personal experience of God, but in virtue of the faith and traditions in which their experience occurred and without which their experience would have had no meaning."<sup>7</sup>

Calliope, therefore, sustains the life of a believing community by urging its members to seek ever further the answer to the enigma of human existence and destiny. Mythical thought is neither philosophical nor scientific, in this sense that it does not try to systematize under general laws a whole series of incidents. It is the individual event that counts: to each individual event in time, there must correspond a cosmic event which gives it its timeless explanation. And the cosmic forces themselves are endowed with a will of their own; they are not identified with the temporal phenomena, although they give them their pattern. When mythical thought asks the question 'why?', the answer is never a general principle, but a singular incident which, in its turn, may call for further questioning. Thus the chain of 'why's can be indefinitely protracted.

A very interesting illustration of Calliope's mythical function is found in the first part of the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*: it contains the story of Rāvaṇa in an age previous to the actual story of his encounter with Rāma. This portion can be conveniently called the *Epic of Rāvaṇa*. From what has been said above, it will be clear that we have no quarrel with those who do not accept the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* as the work of Vālmiki. In our eyes the question of authorship is very secondary, since the epic, by its very nature, embodies the quest of a community. We fully agree that, with the end of the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*, the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* comes to a beautiful conclusion. But, as it is, this beautiful conclusion leaves many questions unanswered, and does not mark the end of the quest. The *Epic of Rāvaṇa*, as we are trying to demonstrate, is a remarkable achievement in which Calliope is seen at her best.

**2. The Epic of Rāvaṇa.**—The end of the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa* is a fitting conclusion to the epic: Bharata hands over the kingdom to Rāma; Rāma is consecrated king; laden with gifts, the

monkeys and the demons go back to their respective kingdoms. Everything seems to be for the best and Ayodhyā, the fortunate capital, lives in peace and prosperity. But the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, very skilfully, raises a new question which leads us into a deeper understanding of the ultimate meaning of Rāma's suffering and victory. The question raised is neither abstract nor philosophical. It is just puzzling and, at first, does not seem to be very important. Sages have come from all directions to congratulate Rāma. Rāma receives them with all the honour due to their rank. The sages praise him for his victory over Rāvaṇa and are glad to see him happily reunited to Sītā and surrounded by his brothers. In the course of their eulogy the sages, almost as a matter of course, declare that the greatest feat of Rāma has been to kill, not Rāvaṇa, but Indrajit, the demon "*avadhyaḥ sarvabhūtanām mahāmāyādharo yudhi*" (L. I, 23b; G.P. I, 30b)—"the demon whom no being whatever could kill and who was a great magician in war." Rāma is intrigued and asks the sages why they place Indrajit above Rāvaṇa. There may be a secret, a mystery which the sages are not allowed to reveal. But if they can speak, he will be glad to hear:

Śakyam yadi mayā śrotuṃ na khalvājñāpayāmi vaḥ  
yadi guhyam na ced vaktuṃ śrotuṃ icchāmi kathyatām.  
(G.P. I, 39; see L. I, 28)

If I am allowed to hear—of course, I am not giving you an order—if it is not a secret, I would like very much to hear what you have to say.

With this enquiry, epic memory is invited to seek in the immutable past the answer to the enigma. It is the sage Agastya who will fulfil the function of Calliope and re-awaken in the community that "fundamental experience of a divinely ordered world", that "symbolic representation of the ultimate reality" which is faintly reflected in the world of men. The first thing we notice is that Agastya finds it necessary to go back to the first *yuga* in order to explain what happened in the second. The incidents of the *Rāmāyaṇa* have taken place in the *tretā-yuga*. Agastya begins his account with the words: "*Purā-kṛta-yuge Rāma . . .*"—"Long ago, in the *kṛta-yuga*, O Rāma . . ." The pattern is to be sought there.

Before analyzing the long mythological exposition of Agastya,

it will be useful to give the general plan of the narrative, so that references may be easily located.

### General Plan

#### *The first generation of rākṣasas*

##### *The birth of Viśravaśa*

Pulastya, son of Prajāpati =

↓

↓

Viśravaśa, the son of penance and transgression

#### 2. *The birth of Kuvera*

Viśravaśa = Devavārṇinī, daughter of

↓

↓

Vaiśravaṇa (Kuvera)

Through penance, Vaiśravaṇa obtains from Brahmā the boon to become one of the protectors of the world. Brahmā gives him the aerial chariot Puṣpaka. Viśravaśa sends him to Laṅkā, a city built for the rākṣasas and abandoned by them. Question: Who were the rākṣasas and why did they abandon Laṅkā?

#### 3. *The first generation of rākṣasas*

At the beginning Brahmā created the waters. Living beings were divided into two classes: the rākṣasas and the yakṣas.

The genealogy of the rākṣasas:

Heti = Bhayā

↓

↓

Vidyutkeśa = Sālakaṭaṅkatā

↓

↓

Sukeśa. (Sukeśa is abandoned by his parents and rescued by Śiva and Pārvatī. Śiva makes him immortal and gives him the power to move in the sky.)

Sukeśa = Devavati

↓

↓

↓

↓

↓

Mālyavān = Sundarī; Sumālīn = Ketumatī; Mālīn = Vasudā

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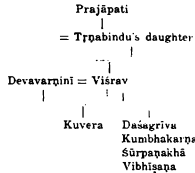
Through penance they obtain boons from Brahmā and they harass the gods and hermits. Viśvakarman builds Laṅkā for them.

4. *Viṣṇu defeats the rākṣasas*

Asked by the gods to stop the oppression of the rākṣasas, Viṣṇu attacks and defeats them. They flee to the underworld and abandon Laṅkā. It is then that Laṅkā is given to Kuvera.

Second Part: *The generation of Rāvaṇa*

Emerging from the underworld, Sumālin sees Kuvera on the chariot Puṣpaka. He wonders how the rākṣasas could regain their power. He sends his daughter Kaikaśī to Viśravas, the father of Kuvera. From him she obtains four children. This is how the genealogy appears:



Kaikaśī tells Daśagrīva to emulate Kuvera's power. Through penance he obtains from Brahmā invulnerability at the hands of gods, demons and yakṣas. He claims Laṅkā as his ancestral capital. Kuvera leaves for Kailāsa and Daśagrīva is crowned king of Laṅkā. He marries Mandodari who gives him a son, Meghanāda.

Third Part: *Rāvaṇa's conquest of the world*

1. *Rāvaṇa and Kuvera*: Rāvaṇa attacks his half-brother, Kuvera, and steals from him the chariot Puṣpaka.

First interlude: Rāvaṇa and Śiva

Second interlude: Rāvaṇa and Vedavati

Third interlude: Rāvaṇa and king Anaraṇya of Ayodhyā

2. *Rāvaṇa and Yama*

3. *Rāvaṇa and Varuṇa*

First interlude: Meghanāda and Śiva

Second interlude: Rāvaṇa and Rambhā

From the abundant mythical material contained in the *Epic of Rāvaṇa* we shall try to reconstruct the pattern which gives its true meaning to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Besides the original question of Indrajit's superiority to Rāvaṇa, many other questions find their answer in this first part of the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*. The universal order and the conflicts of the *krta-yuga* are the prototype on which the *trētā-yuga* is modelled: they are the original which the *trētā-yuga* reproduces without being aware of it.

There exists a sharp distinction between the three supreme gods —Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva—and the other gods among whom Indra has kept his Vedic pre-eminence. The three supreme gods form a class apart: they transcend the world in which the other gods are in conflict with the demons. In this world of strife, the gods jealously defend their privilege of immortality which is eagerly coveted by both demons and men. But neither the inferior gods, nor demons, nor men ever have the ambition to be raised to the level of the supreme gods. In order to obtain the favour of the supreme gods and their protection, one may either invoke them through prayer, or placate them through sacrifice, or bend their will through austerity. The latter means, austerity, is specially efficacious. It is practised both by saints and demons and it has a kind of magic power. It is called '*tapas*' or 'heat' and seems to share in the creative power of the original *tapas* by which Brahmā created the universe.

1. **BRAHMĀ.**— Brahmā is the creator, Prajāpati, the Lord of creatures. His function, as will appear more clearly later, is to maintain the cosmic order. He is not often invoked. But, as a giver of boons, he cannot resist the power of penance or austerity. Yet, in dispensing his favours under the pressure of

penance, he keeps a certain discernment regarding the spiritual dispositions of his clients. The best example of that spiritual discrimination is his attitude towards Rāvaṇa and Vibhiṣaṇa.

The three brothers, Daśagrīva, Kumbhakarṇa and Vibhiṣaṇa have gone to Gokarṇa's hermitage to practise penance. Rāvaṇa's motivation is not pure: his mother Kaikaśī has aroused in him the desire to humiliate his half-brother Kuvera and he is decided to obtain the power which will make him victorious. After fasting for ten thousand years, he immolates his heads by holding them one by one for one thousand years in the fire. As he is about to sacrifice his tenth head, Brahmā appears and tells him that he may choose a boon. Without hesitation Daśagrīva asks for immortality:

Bhagavan prāpināṃ nityaṃ nānyatra maraṇād bhayaṃ  
nāsti mṛtyu-samaḥ śatruṃ amaratvaṃ tato vṛṇe.

(L. IX, 13; G.P. X, 16)

Lord, the constant fear which pursues all beings is the fear of death. Death is the arch-enemy; therefore, I choose immortality.

Brahmā feels that Daśagrīva does not deserve unconditional immortality and he asks him to choose a different boon. Sure of himself, Daśagrīva formulates his request in a manner which satisfies Brahmā. The demon's pride will be his undoing:

Suparṇa-nāga-yakṣāṇāṃ daitya-dānava-rakṣasāṃ  
avadhyo'haṃ Prajādhyakṣa devatānāṃ ca śāśvata.  
Na hi cintā mamānyeṣu prāpiṣu Prapitāmaba  
tṛṣabhūtā hi te manye prāpino mānuṣādāyaḥ.

(L. IX, 14-15; G.P. X, 19-20)

No divine bird or serpent, no yakṣa, no demon, no monster or rākṣasa, no god should be able to kill me, O Lord of the creation.

As to the other creatures, O Divine ancestor, I do not bother, for men and such like beings are, to my mind, mere chaff.

Brahmā agrees and restores the nine heads which have been immolated in the fire. He further gives Daśagrīva the power to change his form at will.

The case of Vibhiṣaṇa is quite different. For five thousand years, the pious rākṣasa has stood on one leg, and for another five thousand years, with head and arms raised, he has followed

sun. Asked by Brahmā to choose a boon, he

Brahmā is pleased beyond means  
of immortality :

(L. IX, 28)

O night-stalker, since, though born of a rākṣasa womb,  
you find no delight in sin, I grant you immortality.

2. *VIṢṆU*.— While Brahmā is compelled to grant boons to both the saint and the sinner, Viṣṇu is the undisputed champion of righteousness. He abhors sin and loathes pride and arrogance. In the conflict between gods and demons, he is on the side of the gods. The gods know his power and find in him their refuge. In the *kṛta-yuga*, the gods appeal to him against the oppression of the first generation of rākṣasas (see General Plan, First Part, 4). Viṣṇu engages in battle with the demons and forces them to abandon Lañkā and to seek refuge in the underworld. He is the object of fervent prayer and his devotees have unlimited confidence in him.

3. *ŚIVA*.— Śiva is the most mysterious of the three supreme gods. His power is occult and his attitudes are ambiguous. Unlike Viṣṇu, he is partial to the rākṣasas. When the baby-demon Sukeśa is abandoned by his parents (see General Plan, First Part, 3), Śiva and Pārvatī, in their compassion, rescue him and from that time on they feel deeply attached to the rākṣasa race. Thus when the sons of Sukeśa, after obtaining boons from Brahmā, begin to harass the gods, in their desperation the latter go to Śiva for help. But Śiva replies that he will not interfere :

Sukeśaṃ prati sāpekṣaḥ prāha devagapān prabhuḥ  
aḥap tām na hanisyāmi mama vadhyaṃ na te'surāḥ.

(L. V, 8b-9a; G.P. VI, 9b-10a)

The Lord who was partial to Sukeśa told the gods: "I am not going to kill them; the demon should not die at my hands."

Yet, at the same time, he cannot remain completely indifferent to the plight of the gods. He advises them to approach Viṣṇu who will surely fight for them. Viṣṇu is fully aware of Śiva's attitude:

Transcending the conflict between gods and demons, we begin to discern the real and timeless conflict between Viṣṇu and Śiva.

Daśagrīva does not seem to know the real power of Śiva. In his arrogance he tries to lead the *Puṣpaka* chariot which he has just stolen from Kuvera, to the mountain where Śiva resides. He is stopped by Nandin. Paying no heed to Nandin's curse, he seizes the mountain and shakes it. But Śiva, steadying the mountain with his big toe, pins down the powerful arms of Daśagrīva. The demon utters a clamour which shakes the three worlds. He then admits defeat and addresses a prayer to Śiva. Pleased by his energy, Śiva changes his name into Rāvaṇa and gives him a sword called *Candrahāsa*. In spite of the manifest interest shown by Śiva, Rāvaṇa will never become a devotee of Śiva.

Rāvaṇa's son, however, has chosen another path. One day Rāvaṇa, entering the Nikumbhilā garden of Laṅkā, sees his son in the garb of an ascetic engaged in performing sacrifices. Rāvaṇa is surprised and asks his son to explain his conduct. Megha ṭha then tells his father that he has obtained the secret of various sacrifices. But among them the most difficult and the most powerful are those offered to Mahēśvara:

Māheśvare pravṛtte tu yajñe pumbhiḥ sudurīlabhe  
varāṇste lādhavān putraḥ sāksāt Paśupateriha.

(G.P. XXV, 9; see L. XXXI, 9)

But the sacrifice offered in honour of Mahēśvara is the most difficult to master. Through it your son has obtained boons from Paśupati in person.

What are those boons? A celestial chariot moving at will in the sky; a magic power called *tāmasī* by which darkness can be created under the cover of which Meghanāda will remain invisible; an extraordinary bow with indestructible arrows and other wonderful weapons which will destroy all enemies. Rāvaṇa is not in favour of worshipping the gods, although he cannot but admire the power obtained by his son:

It is in the most difficult task of Rāvaṇa's career that the superiority of his son will appear. Rāvaṇa can boast of his victory over Kuvera, Yama and Varuṇa. Indra, so far, remains unconquered. Rāvaṇa decides to add Indra's defeat to his universal fame. But, in his encounter with Indra, he is unable to assert his superiority. Indra knows that Brahmā's boon protects his enemy from death: unable to kill him, he will make him prisoner. Although his armies are almost completely routed, the god, undaunted, succeeds in surrounding the demon. Rāvaṇa's followers are dismayed:

It is then that Meghanāda, in mad fury, enters the fray, under the cover of the magic darkness given to him by Siva:

Tato ratham samāruhya Rāvaṇiḥ krodha-mūrchitaḥ  
tat sainyaṃ atisaṃkrudhaḥ praviveśa sudāruṇam.  
Sa tām praviśya māyām tu datāṃ gopatinā purā  
adrśyaḥ sarvabhūtānām tat sainyaṃ samavākīrat.

(L. XXXV, 23-24; see G.P. XXIX, 22-23)

Then, mad with fury, Rāvaṇa's son mounted his chariot; with uncontrolled anger, he plunged into the fray.  
Entering into that magic darkness formerly given to him by

Indra is captured by the magic power of Meghanāda, young demon tells his father that the war is over and c him away from the battle-field. Meghanāda gains the glorio title of Indrajit and his father acknowledges his greatness.

The theology of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is thus exposed through th medium of concrete mythological incidents. It all starts with simple question: why do the sages consider Indrajit superio to Rāvaṇa? The answer is that Meghanāda is Śiva's devotee while Rāvaṇa rests satisfied with the boons of Brahmā. It is th supreme conflict with Indra which demonstrates the dreadfu power of Śiva. Śiva has a predilection for the *rākṣasas* and h has found in Meghanāda a worthy descendant of his adopte son Sukeśa. When Agastya tells Rāma that his true greatne: lies in the victory over Indrajit, he arouses the curiosity of Rā and finds the occasion to explain to him that among the thr supreme gods, it is between Viṣṇu and Śiva that the re conflict exists. Brahmā stands as the divine power which mai tains the cosmic order impartially. As will be shown later, tl cosmic order itself implies a struggle between the forces of go and the forces of evil. In its timeless pattern, that struggle mythologically represented by the antagonism between Viṣ and Śiva, and their epic counterparts are Rāma and Indrajit.

Thus, to resume the words of Dumézil, if the human sto of the epic is mostly "a transposition in the world of men of vast system of mythical representations," we are now in position to establish the following parallels:

*BRAHMĀ* finds his epic counterpart in Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa:  
*VIṢṆU* finds his epic counterpart in Rāma;  
*ŚIVA* finds his epic counterpart in Indrajit.

4. *The Inferior Gods*.— Although immortal, they are vulnerat Involved in the cosmic struggle between good and evil, they : unable by themselves to bring it to a happy conclusion. Wt they appeal to the supreme gods, they find Brahmā paraly; by his own boons and promises, Śiva reluctant to do anythi against the demons, and Viṣṇu ready to help provided Brahm favours granted to the demons do not make his interfere: vain.

Word ✧

This last incident in which Indra's humiliation appears clearly as the fulfilment of a curse introduces us to a new vision of the universe and of human destiny. The *Uttara-kāṇḍa* in its vivid mythological concreteness throws an unsuspected light on the meaning of the whole epic.

In common with most of the ancient world, the Indian epic attaches to the uttered word a power which has been lost in our modern world. In primitive and ancient cultures, there are no 'empty words', but every uttered word is not only significative, but operative. Hence the reverence of the ancients for the Word of God. We have for example, in the ancient Near-East, this beautiful hymn addressed to the moon-god Sin:

When thy word is pronounced in heaven the Igigi  
prostrate themselves;  
! When thy word is pronounced on earth the Anunnaki  
kiss the ground.  
When thy word drifts along in heaven like the wind  
it makes rich the feeding and drinking of the land.



In the *Old Testament*, the *Book of Genesis* opens with the manifestation of the creative power of the Word of God: "God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light." Isaiah the prophet (55:10-11) makes God himself celebrate the unflinching efficacy of his Word:

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

This efficacy of the divine word is reflected in the irreversibility of the human word. Once uttered, the word cannot be recalled. "The belief in the power of the word seems to reflect a preliterate culture in which there were no written records to preserve the spoken word. Yet the word has a permanence especially when it reaches from the present into the future as it does in promises, threats, wishes, commands. Here the word posits the reality which it signifies and endures in the process which it initiates."<sup>10</sup> Examples abound in ancient literatures of the binding character of the uttered word. Enough to remember Kunti's inadvertent "*sametya bhunkta*" which determines Draupadi's destiny as the wife of the five Pāṇḍavas (*Mahābhārata*, Adiparvan, CXI, 1-16) or Jacob's cunning in obtaining the blessing of Isaac and in supplanting Esau (*Genesis* 27: 1-38).

In the *Epic of Rāvaṇa* the theme of the power of the word is so central that it provides a completely unified understanding of the whole epic. Here again, it is through the medium of mythical incidents of the *kr̥ta-yuga* that the new vision is gradually revealed.

*The Word of Brahmā.*—Let us begin with the incident of Rāvaṇa's campaign against the realm of Yama (*see* General n, Third Part, 2—L. XXIV-XXV G.P. XXI-XXII). After leaving Kuvera and after his encounter with Śiva, Rāvaṇa spends his time in harassing mortals, whom he despises so much. Rāda taunts him: is the great Rāvaṇa satisfied with those little conquests in which he subdues those puny creatures called men? Nārada gives a description of our human condition which is so moving that I cannot resist the temptation to quote a few verses:

Paśya tūvaṁ mahābāho rākṣasasēvaṁ mānuṣam  
muḍham evaṁ vicitrārthuṁ yasya na jñāyate gatibḥ.  
Kvacid vāditra-ṇṭyādi sevayate muditair janaiḥ  
rudayate cāparair ārtair dhārāśru-nayanānanaiḥ.  
Mātāpitrśutasneha-bhāryābandhumanoramaiḥ  
mohito'yaṁ jano dhvastaḥ kleśaṁ svaṁ nāvabudhyate.  
(G.P. XX, 12-14)

O rākṣasa, lord of powerful arms, look at man:  
Deluded, he rushes after all that glitters, not knowing where  
he goes. In joyful mood, he enjoys music and dance; afflicted,  
he cries, his face flowing with bitter tears. Infatuated with  
affection for mother, father and son, with love for wife  
and friend, man is already destroyed, for he does not under-  
stand his pitiful plight.

All mortals must eventually fall under the power of Yama, the god of death. Hence, if Rāvaṇa wants to establish his dominion over all mortals, it is Yama whom he must vanquish:

Avaśyaṁ ebhibḥ sarvaiśca gantavyaṁ Yama-sādanam  
tannigṛhṇiṣva Paulastya Yamaṁ parapuraṇjaya.  
(G.P. XX, 16; L. XXXIII, 10b-11a)

Inevitably, they all have to go to Yama's dwelling; hence,  
O Paulastya, it is Yama whom you should capture.

Rāvaṇa takes up the challenge and Nārada hastens to Yama to inform him of the approaching onslaught. Rāvaṇa arrives on his chariot and witnesses the torments of the sinners and the delights of the just. He liberates all the ghosts. The guardians of hell are enraged and a terrific encounter ensues. Rāvaṇa decimates the armies of Yama. Then Yama himself appears, brandishing the terrible *kāladanḍa*, the weapon which, through the boon of Brahmā, deals death infallibly. He moves towards the

triumphant demon. Gods and rākṣasas gather to witness the extraordinary duel. As Yama raises the fatal *kāladanḍa*, Brahmā interferes. On the one hand, it is he who has created *kāladanḍa* and endowed it with absolute infallibility:

Amogho hyeṣa sarveṣāṃ prā, inām amitaprabhaḥ  
kāladanḍo mayā sṛṣṭaḥ sarvaṇītyu-purabharab.  
(L. XXV, 38; G.P. XXII, 43)

For it is I who created this infallible *kāladanḍa* whose  
effulgence is limitless; I created it to be, for all beings,  
the harbinger of death.

On the other hand, it is Brahmā himself who has given Rāvaṇa the boon that no god can ever kill him. Hence the dilemma:

Yadi hynsmin nipatite na mriyetaiṣa rākṣasaḥ  
mriyeta vā Daśagrivastadāpyubhayato'nṛtaṃ.  
(L. XXV, 40; G.P. XXII, 45)

Once the weapon falls, whether Daśagriva dies or not, in  
both cases my word is found false.

If Daśagriva dies, the boon granted to him is a lie; if Daśagriva lives, the infallibility of the *kāladanḍa* is a lie. There could be no greater disaster than to make the word of Brahmā untrue, for:

Yo hi mām anṛtaṃ kuryād devo vā mānuṣo'pi vā  
trālokyam anṛtaṃ tena kṛtaṃ syān nātra saṃśayaḥ.  
(G.P. XXII, 41)

If somebody, whether god or man, makes me untrue, then,  
beyond doubt, he makes the three worlds untrue.

It is, therefore, the whole cosmic order which is at stake. Brahmā's veracity must be absolute, if the world has to keep its consistency. The truth and reality of the whole universe lie in its strict conformity to Brahmā's word. The practical dilemma in which Brahmā finds himself has only one solution: to forbid Yama to hurl his weapon at Rāvaṇa. The rule is absolute:

Varaḥ khalu mayaitasmai dattastridāśapuhgava  
tat tvayā nānṛtaṃ kāryaṃ yan mayā vyāhṛtaṃ vacaḥ.  
(L. XXV, 37; G.P. XXII, 40)

O Best of gods, I have indeed given him a boon; the word  
which I have uttered, you should never make it a lie.

Even if the wicked has to go unscathed, even if he enjoys his triumph, the rule must not be broken.

Truth, therefore, appears as the supreme value to which all the rest must be sacrificed. But truth here is not an abstract system or a set of abstract principles: it is the factual fidelity of Brahṁā to his uttered word. And this concrete divine truth sets the pattern of truth in the whole epic.

2. *The Word as the Norm of Truth.*—The standard of human behaviour is modelled on the cosmic order. The given word the supreme norm, regardless of the circumstances and consequences involved. One has the impression that, in human affairs also, the slightest deviation from absolute fidelity to the uttered word contains a threat of imminent anarchy. Man, by his unflinching adherence to his truth, contributes in some mysterious way to the maintenance of the cosmic order. There is something almost inhuman about that absolute fidelity to truth. That is why Rāma, who is the epic symbol of adherence to truth, seems to lack the most appealing feelings of an ordinary man. To modern readers the indignation of Lakṣmaṇa at the time of Rāma's banishment appears to be a genuine reaction to injustice. We would enjoy the uncontrolled outburst of his anger and the punishment of Kaikeyī and Daśaratha, as we enjoy the wrath of Achilles. But the *Rāmāyaṇa* would then lose its real dimension. Rāma does not allow his younger brother to give vent to his indignation. Although Lakṣmaṇa's submission may disappoint the humanist, it is in perfect harmony with the epic perspective in which the human world is never a self-contained whole, but the symbolic reflection of the divine order.

The tears and humiliation of Kauśalyā put Rāma in the same dilemma as that which Brahṁā faced when Yama threatened Rāvaṇa with the *kāladanḍa*. Rāma, though not unmoved by his mother's distress, does not and cannot change his resolve to stand by his father's word.

Witnessing the unbending rigour of her husband against the demons, Sītā begs him to relent. She praises him for his fidelity to truth and for his faithful love. But she is afraid that Rāma, forgetting that he has become an ascetic, may be carried away by his *kṣatriya* spirit in his violence against the demons:

Kadaryakaluṣā buddhir jāyate śāstrasevanāt  
punargatvā tvayodhyāyām kṣatradharmaṃ carisyasi.  
(*Araṇya-kāṇḍa*, IX, 28)

e constant use of weapons, the mind becomes mean

Rāma explains to his wife that the hermits and the ascetics have entreated him to protect them against the incursions of the rākṣasas. He has given his word and he must be true to it.

Mayā cuitad vacaḥ śrūtvā kārtsnyena paripālanaṁ  
rṣīṇāṃ daṇḍakāraṇye saṁśrūtaṃ Janakātmaṇe.  
Saṁśrūtya na ca śakṣyāmi jīvamānaḥ pratiśravam  
munināṃ anyathā kartuṃ satyaṃ iṣṭaṃ hi me sadā.  
Apyaham jīvitaṃ jahyāṃ tvāṃ vā Site salaḥśmaṇāṃ  
na tu pratijñāṃ saṁśrūtya brāhmaṇebhyo viśeṣataḥ.  
(Araṇya-kāṇḍa, X, 16b-19a)

When I heard their request, O daughter of Janaka, I promised to the hermits to give them full protection. Having promised I cannot, as long as I am alive, go back on the word given to the ascetics; for truth has always been my ideal.

I would lose my life, lose you, Sitā, and Lakṣmaṇa rather than break a promise, specially when made to brahmins.

Rāma, the *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, is the Preserver of the universe: no human value, however sacred, can make him deviate from his duty to keep the WORD in its total integrity. His behaviour in human affairs is the epic transposition of the changeless fidelity of the Creator to his creative WORD.

✱ 3. *A Curse and a Blessing.*— Before dying Daśaratha remembers the sin he had committed in his youth and makes his confession to Kauśalyā. He is old and his sorrow is so consuming that his memory is impaired. Yet, at the last moment he realizes that he is justly punished. Inadvertently he had killed the son of the blind ascetic: in return for his sin, the ascetic had cursed him:

Putra-vyasanaṃ dūḥkhaṃ yad etan mama sāmpratam  
evaṃ tvāṃ putra-śokena rājan kālāṃ karisyasi.  
(Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, LXIV, 54)

Just as today the loss of my son brought me dire affliction, so you, too, O king, will die out of sorrow for your son.

But his failing memory prevents Daśaratha from perceiving the deeper meaning of both the curse and his sorrow. In the *Uttara kāṇḍa* somebody remembers that behind, and deeper than

u dharmo'tra sūta syāt karmanyasmin aśokhane  
ilīp tu samutsrjya paure hinārtha-vādini.

(L. LII, 8: see G.P. I. 8)

O chariot what justice can there be in this dastardly  
deed: to banish Sītā because some citizens talk nonsense?

Sumantra sympathizes with him, yet tells him that his indignation and his sorrow arise from a lack of vision. Years before, king Daśaratha, taking his charioteer into his confidence, told him the following. One day the king went to Vasiṣṭha's hermitage and met there the sage Durvāsas. He asked the sage to reveal to him the future destiny of his dynasty. And this is what the sage told him. In true epic fashion, the sage began to explain the future by going back to the distant past:

Durvāsāḥ sumahātejā vyāhartum upacakrame  
śṛṇu rājan purā vṛttaṃ tadā devāsure yudhi.

(G.P. LI, 11)

Durvāsas of great effulgence began to speak:  
"Listen, O king, to an ancient incident, at the time of the war between the gods and the demons."

The demons were in flight. They sought refuge in the hermitage of Bṛghu and Bṛghu's wife gave them shelter. Viṣṇu was vexed by that gesture and in his anger, hurled his discus and cut the head of Bṛghu's wife. Bṛghu in his turn, seeing his wife dead, cursed Viṣṇu:

Yasmād avadhyāṃ me patnīm avadhīḥ krodha-mūrechitah  
tasmāt tvam mānuṣe loke janiṣyasi Janārdana.  
Tatra patnī-viyogaṃ tvam-prāpsyase bahuvārsikam.

(G.P. LI, 15-16a)

Durvāsas goes on explaining that Viṣṇu will be born as the son of Daśaratha, will have a glorious reign and will himself be a father of two sons.

The parallel between the two curses—that of Viṣṇu by Bhṛgu and that of Daśaratha by the blind ascetic—is striking. When Daśaratha was cursed, he was childless. The curse, to be fulfilled, demands that he should become the father of a son. Daśaratha's fatherhood imposed upon him by the curse becomes the means through which Bhṛgu's curse against Viṣṇu finds its realization. When the old king, blinded by sorrow, sees in his miserable plight a mere punishment for his unwitting crime, he fails to realize that that very crime is a blessing in disguise. It is Sumantra who has kept the memory of Durvāsas' revelation and who restores in Lakṣmaṇa the true vision of things.

This little excursion outside the *Epic of Rāvaṇa* was necessary to do justice to Calliope's remarkable ingenuity. Coming back to the story of Rāvaṇa, we see Indra, under the threat of Rāvaṇa's attack, going to beg Viṣṇu's help (see General Plan, Third Part, 4). The main reason for his fear is the boon granted to Rāvaṇa by Brahmā:

Vara-pradānād balavān na khalvanyena hetunā  
tat tu satyaṃ vacaḥ kāryaṃ yad uktam Padmayoninā.  
(G.P. XXVII, 8; see L. XXXIII, 8)

The demon's strength has no other source than the boon granted him; but whatever word is uttered by Brahmā must come true.

Viṣṇu comforts Indra; but, in the present circumstances, he is both powerless against Brahmā's boon and unwilling to challenge it:

Na tāva eṣa duṣṭatmā śakyo jetaṃ surasuraib  
hantaṃ cāpi śamasādhya varadaena durjayay.  
Nāhatvā samare śatruṃ Viṣṇuḥ pratinvartate  
durtabhascaiva kāmodya varaguptaddhu Ravanaḥ.  
(G.P. XXVII, 15, 18; see L. XXXIII,

For the present neither god nor demon can conquer the  
rascal; even if they attack him, they cannot kill him, for the  
boon makes him invincible.  
Never does Viṣṇu return from battle without killing his foe;  
such a hope would be vain today, for Rāvaṇa is securely  
shielded by his boon.

But a day will come—and this is a solemn promise—when Viṣṇu  
will be in a position to exterminate the demon:

Viṣṇu cursed by Bhṛgu knows that he has to be born as a man.  
The prayer of Indra offers him an opportunity to transform  
the curse into a blessing. He does so in the full knowledge of  
Brahmā's word: only a man can kill Rāvaṇa. Bhṛgu's curse  
strikes at the vulnerable spot in Rāvaṇa's armour and all will  
be done in perfect accordance with Brahmā's word.

After being cursed by the blind ascetic, Daśaratha too makes  
a promise. One day, wounded in a battle, he is nursed by Kaikeyī.  
He is so pleased with her affectionate service that he asks her  
to choose two boons: he will give her whatever she asks for.  
When years after, inspired by devilish ambition, she demands  
Rāma's banishment and Bharata's coronation, the old king,  
bound by his word, has to accede to her cruel request. But at  
that moment he does not perceive the connection between his  
promise and the curse. When death is imminent, his memory



4. *The Ubiquity of the Word.*— By now one may be able to see that the story of the *Rāmayaṇa*, read against the background of the *Epic of Rāvaṇa*, assumes a dimension which no ordinary romance of love and adventure could ever claim to possess. The timeless mythic events of the *krta-yuga* throw their shadow on the time-bound history of the *tretā-yuga*. The fact that the protagonists of the human story are mostly unaware of the ultimate meaning of their struggles and sufferings greatly helps the believing listener to grasp with greater acuity the mystery of human existence. When Agastya or Sumantra raises before him the veil which was hiding timeless reality and allows him to get a glimpse of the ultimate, he, like Lakṣmaṇa, is overwhelmed with joy and gratitude:

Besides his campaigns against the four guardians of the world, Rāvaṇa undertakes many other conquests, for his lust and pride are never satisfied. Before following him in his adventures, one must remember that the *krta-yuga* witnessed the first struggle between Viṣṇu and the rākṣasas. At that time, Rāvaṇa was not yet born and the conflict arose between Viṣṇu and Rāvaṇa's ancestors, Mālyavān, Sumālin and Mālin (see General Plan, First Part, 4). Viṣṇu defeated them and drove them from Laṅkā. They were forced to take refuge in the underworld. When Rāvaṇa enters the scene, most of his encounters end with a curse. The word uttered against him in the *krta-yuga* will have its full effect in the *tretā-yuga*.

a. *Rāvaṇa and Vcdavati.*— After his encounter with Śiva, Rāvaṇa meets (see General Plan, Third Part, 1, Second Interlude), a beautiful young lady practising penance. He rebukes her ✓

and begs her to make a better use of her youthful beauty. She replies that her father, the sage Kuśadhvaja, gave her the name Vedavati and destined her to be Viṣṇu's wife. In vain gods, demons and gandharvas have asked to marry her: her father would have no other son-in-law than Viṣṇu himself. Angered by her father's refusal, Śambhu, king of the *dāityas*, killed him. Her mother threw herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. And now Vedavati is practising penance in order to obtain Viṣṇu:

Rāvaṇa derides her and seizes her by the hair. Changed into a sword, her hand cuts the hair and she throws herself into the fire in order to purify herself from the demon's desecrating contact. Before being consumed by the flames, she curses Rāvaṇa:

Vedavati will be re-born as Sītā. Concluding, Agastya tells Rāma:

Kṛte yuge vinirvyttam etat parapurāṇajaya  
tretā-yuge tad vadhārtham jāñhe tu Janakātmajā.  
(L. XVI, 32; see G.P. XVII, 43)

This, O conqueror of hostile cities, was not realized in the *kṛta-yuga*; but in the *tretā-yuga* Janaka's daughter was born for the destruction of Rāvaṇa.

✓ b. *Rāvaṇa and King Anaraṇya*.— After terrifying many kings Rāvaṇa goes to Ayodhyā. There he challenges King Anaraṇya who agrees to fight with him. King Anaraṇya is fatally wounded. Before dying he speaks to Rāvaṇa:

Yadi dattam yadi hutam yadi me sukṛtam tapaḥ  
yadi guptāḥ prajāḥ samyak tadā satyaṁ vaco'stu me.

c. *Rāvaṇa and Rambhā*.— In an enchanting mountain-grove, the moon is shedding its soft rays on trees and streams (*see* General Plan, Third Part. 3, Second Interlude). Rāvaṇa feels romantic:

Rāvaṇaḥ sa mahāvīryaḥ kāmasya vaśam āgataḥ  
viniḥśvāsya viniḥśvāsya śaśinaṃ samavaikṣata.

(G.P. XXVI, 13: *see* L. XXXII, 9)

Rāvaṇa, the demon of mighty power, has fallen under the power of love; with deep sighs of yearning he gazes at the moon.

At that moment, Rambhā, pearl of nymphs, appears before him. He sees in her a response to his longing: he seizes her and offers her his love. Rambhā replies that she is the beloved of Nalakūbara, son of Kuvera and that she has made a tryst with him:

Rāvaṇa listens only to his passion: he seizes the nymph and violates her. Escaping from his hands, Rambhā, in complete disarray, runs to Nalakūbara and tells him with a trembling voice the terrible thing that has happened to her. Nalakūbara, after meditating and offering water, utters the following curse against Rāvaṇa:

Akāmā tena yasmāt tvaṃ bulād bhadre pradharṣi  
tasmāt sa yuvatiḥ sarvā nākāmā dharṣayisyati.

Yadā hyakāmā duṣṭātmā dharṣayisyati yoṣitaḥ  
tadāsyā sapta-dhā mūrdhā phaliṣyati na saṃśayaḥ.

(L. XXXII, 47-48; G.P. XXVI, 54b-56a)

The three curses uttered against āvaṇa in the *kṛta-yuga* will shape the demon's destiny in the *tretā-yuga*. The mythic pattern of the epic is complete. In the text of the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, the various incidents are scattered without any apparent attempt at systematization. Epic memory seems to work at random. But the total effect is surprising: the WORD is omnipotent. The seemingly haphazard profusion of boons, curses and promises, once visualized in the light of Calliope's function, presents a rare structural quality which endows the whole epic with a new life.

Like the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the epic of the victory of Good over Evil. Although the final victory of Good is a great comfort to the listeners of the epic, the question lingers in their minds: Why does Evil exist at all? Why should there be a struggle? Why is the world not wholly good? Does the suffering caused by the conflict between Good and Evil make sense?

On two occasions already we have been given the beginning of an answer. King Daśaratha, before dying, explains to Kauśalyā that the banishment of Rāma with all the suffering it entails, is the just punishment of his fatal mistake. The 'sin' which he committed in killing the young hermit was not in-

tended. Yet, it broke the divine order and the curse of the blind father was meant to restore that order by punishing the unwitting sinner.

In the case of Indra, we have a definite moral fault. When Indra disguised himself as Gautama to seduce Ahalyā, he knew what he was doing. His humiliation at the hands of Indrajit was an expiation in the true sense of the word. Yet, Gautama's curse also fell on Ahalyā who had been deceived by Indra's disguise: she too in her ignorance had violated the divine order and she could not escape punishment.

But the question rebounds: why should Indra fall a victim to lust? Why should Daśaratha and Ahalyā be deceived into committing a crime? The *Epic of Rāma* will offer us an answer which goes much deeper into the origin and the meaning of evil than the mere doctrine of retribution.

1. *The Origin of Evil*.—The only cosmogonic account found in the *Epic of Rāma* is rather obscure. Agastya has just told Rāma that Laukā was given to Kuvera after the demons, defeated by Viṣṇu, had to seek refuge in the underworld (see General Plan, First Part, 2). Rāma is surprised: he has never heard of the first generation of *rākṣasas*:

Pulastya-vaṁśāt sambhūtā rākṣasā iti naḥ śrutam  
idānim api cānyeṣāṃ sambhavas tvad udiritaḥ.

(L. III. 4; see G.P. IV.)

We always heard that the *rākṣasas* originated from Pulastya's family; but now you seem to speak of the origin of other demons.

Agastya goes on to explain (see General Plan, First Part, 3) Prajāpati had created the waters. In order to defend them he then created living beings. But those living beings, feeling uneasy and being tormented by hunger, thirst and fear, went to Prajāpati and humbly asked him what they were supposed to do. Prajāpati, smiling, replied:

Prajāpati told them all as in jest:  
"Protect these waters with care,  
respect."

In their eagerness to obey, they all gave their assent, but some of them mispronounced their response to Prajāpati's order. Instead of saying "*raksāmah*", like their companions, they said: "*yaksāmah*". This verbal difference was immediately translated into fact: those who said "*raksāmah*" became *rāksasas*; those who said "*yaksāmah*" became *yaksas*. The verbal root '*yaks*' means 'to honour, to worship'. The verbal root '*raks*' means 'to protect', but it also means 'to hurt, to injure'. Thus right from the beginning, the first living beings were divided, through a mere accident of speech, into two classes: the *yaksas*, symbols of religious fidelity, and the *rāksasas*, ambiguous beings capable both of good and of evil behaviour.

This ambiguous character of the *rāksasas* is illustrated by the different attitudes of the two pri of the *rāksasas*:

Tatra Prahetir Hetiśca bhrātarau rāksasasrabhau  
Madhu-Kaitabha-saṅkāśau bābhūvatur arindamau.  
Prahetir dharmikastatra tapovanagatastadā  
Hetir dārakriyārthe tu param yatnam athākarot.  
(G.P. IV. 14-15; see L. III. 14-15)

There and then the two brothers Praheti and Heti, foremost among the *rāksasas*, became victorious like Madhu and Kaitabha.

Praheti, the pious one, retired to a forest hermitage; but Heti made frantic efforts to find a wife.

Heti married Bhayā and it is from that first pair of demons that all the demons descend. The son of Heti, Vidyutkeśa, falls a victim to lust: having obtained a son from his wife Sālaka-ṭāṅkatā, he yields to his wife's charms and abandons his son:

Reme tu sārḍham patinā viśmṛtya sutam ātmajam.  
utsṛjastu tadā garbho ghaṇasābda-samasvanab.  
(G.P. IV, 25; see L. III. 25)

While sporting with her husband, she forgot her own child: and the abandoned baby began to cry aloud.

The baby was Sukeśa whom Śiva and Pārvatī rescued and endowed with special gifts. The demons' proclivity towards evil became fully manifest in the sons of Sukeśa who were ousted from Laṅkā by Viṣṇu (see General Plan, First Part, 3 and 4).

The above account does not offer a philosophical explanation of the origin of evil; it just establishes the fact that, from the

The function of Satan, in the *Book of Job*, is to harass the just man in order to test his fidelity and it is with God's permission and within the limits set by God that Satan torments him. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the role of the *rākṣasas* is less explicitly defined: they appear like evil forces against whom Brahmā is helpless because of the boons he has granted them. Yet, those very boons are so circumscribed as to set limits to their capacity to do harm.

Let us now examine the mythological account of the origin of Rāvaṇa (*see* General Plan, Second Part). Emerging from the underworld, Sumālin, one of the three sons of Sukeśa, roams the earth and sees Kuvera travelling in the sky in his chariot *Puspaka*. He remembers with bitterness the past glory of the *rākṣasas* and wonders if it could not be restored. He soon finds a plan: he will send his beautiful daughter, Kaikāṣī, to Kuvera's father, Viśravas, with the hope that she will be accepted as a bride. Kaikāṣī approaches Viśravas as the sage is performing the *agnihotra*. The moment is not auspicious and Viśravas, who has through meditation grasped the intention of the youthful *rākṣasī*, tells her so. If he marries her, their children will be dangerous and cruel *rākṣasas*. Kaikāṣī is deeply distressed and begs the sage to withdraw his prediction:

Bhagavannīdṛṣān putrāṃstvatto'haṃ brahmavādinah  
necchāmi sudurācārān prasādam kartum arhasi.

(G.P. IX, 25; *see* L. VIII, 20)

O blessed one, I do not want to obtain such wicked sons  
from you who are an expounder of the Veda: please relent.

Viśravas cannot go back on his word, but to mitigate the bitterness of his prophecy, he adds:

Viśravas himself was the son of austerity and transgression. His father, Pulastya, son of Prajāpati, was practising penance and reading the Veda in Tṛṇabindu's hermitage on the slope of the Meru mountain. A group of nymphs were sporting there, dancing to the accompaniment of songs and music. The sage, disturbed in his meditation, gave them an angry warning:

Tṛṇabindu's daughter was not there when the sage uttered his threat. Looking for her friends, she suddenly saw the sage absorbed in his meditation. On the spot she became pregnant. Frightened by that unexpected experience, she rushed to her father who was shocked at her sight and said:

The poor girl replied:

Sātha kṛtvāñjaliṃ dinā kanyovāca tapodhanam  
na jāne kāraṇaṃ tāta yena me rūpaṃ idṛśam.

(L. I, 46; G.P. II, 20)

Folding her hands, the poor girl told the sage:

"O father, I do not know why I've got into this shape."

ṛṇabindu enters into meditation and understands the whole situation. He takes his daughter to Pulastya who accepts her as his consort. In due time she gives birth to a son whom the sage calls Viśravas:



Thus Viśravaś, the grandson of Prajāpati, bears a name which reveals his ambiguous origin: born of penance and transgression, he will be the father of both Kuvera and Rāvaṇa. His two wives, Devavārīṇī and Kaikāśī are the mythic symbol of his ambivalence. Yet as in the case of the first generation of *rākṣasas*, the power of evil, symbolized by Kaikāśī, is not absolute. To the two brothers, Heti and Praheti, of the first generation, correspond the two brothers, sons of Kaikāśī, Rāvaṇa and Vibhiṣaṇa.

The epic vision does not, therefore, make of Good and Evil two independent forces having independent origins. On the one hand both *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas* are created by Prajāpati; on the other, both Kuvera and Rāvaṇa are great-grandsons of Prajāpati. From the beginning there is, in the created world, a kind of flaw, a weakness which need not be intentional, but which has the capacity to upset the cosmic order. This flaw is symbolized, in the first instance, by the ambiguity of the verbal root '*raks*'; in the second instance, by the unintentional fault of Tṛṇabindu's daughter.

No reason is assigned for the existence of that congenital weakness. It seems to be the aetiological explanation of a universal experience, the mythical pattern that finds its reflection in the consciousness which every man has of his own ambiguity. Just like the myth of the fall in the *Book of Genesis*, it seeks to trace back to its origin the universal conflict which divides man against himself and against his fellow-men. It could be called the 'original sin', provided the word 'sin' is not understood in the narrow sense of moral imperfection, but in the broader sense of flaw or blemish.

2. *The Meaning of Evil.*—*Yakṣa* and *rākṣasa*, Kuvera and Rāvaṇa are the mythical prototypes of the created world and of the struggle between the forces of Good and the forces of Evil. The forces of Evil themselves preserve a germ of goodness which is mythically symbolized by the following pairs: the

✓ *Immanent Retribution.*—The curses uttered against the evil-doers always strike at the specific evil which has provoked them. Dasaratha has killed the son of the blind ascetic; he will be punished in his son and he will die of sorrow after being forced by the promise given to Kaikeyi to banish his own son. Viṣṇu has killed the wife of Bhīṣṇu; he will suffer for many years a separation from his wife, after being forced by the evil rumours of the citizens to banish her. Indra in his lustful passion has violated the honour of Ahalyā; besides being condemned to fall into his enemies' hands, he is also condemned to become impotent. The lustful assault of Kambhā by Kavana is followed by a curse which condemns the demon, under the threat of death, to abstain from any violence against women.

Examples could be multiplied to show that Evil carries within itself the seed of retribution.

✓ b. *The Ultimate Victory Of Good.*—When we pass from the individual to the cosmic vision, as symbolized by the conflict between Kama and Ravana or Indrajit, the mythic figure of Brahmā obtains a new significance. Brahmā, as has been shown above, is the sole origin of the whole creation. Although he seems to be at the mercy of the austerities of the good and sinners alike, he yet keeps a control on his gifts. Every favour granted by him to an evil-minded creature is always loaded with a condition which makes the power of Evil precarious. He refuses to give Ravana unconditional immortality. Here again Evil defeats itself, for Ravana, blinded by pride, deliberately dismisses man as a possible challenge to his power. Brahmā grants the boon, knowing fully well its dire consequences. He seems to let loose the powers of oppression and lust. True to the word given, he appears to be a helpless witness of the havoc wrought by those whom he has blessed with his boons. He goes so far as to congratulate the demons for their prowess. After the defeat of Indra, Prajāpati expresses in glowing terms his admiration

father. But when, in exchange for Indra's  
for the gift of immortality, Brahmā  
must rest satisfied with a conditional

Maneṣṭaṇ nityaśo havyair mantrair sampūjya pāva  
saṃgramam avatartuṇ ca śatru-nirjaya-kāṅkṣiṇaḥ.  
Aśva-yukto ratho mahyam uttiṣṭhet tu vibhāvasoḥ  
tatsthāsyāmaratā syān me eṣa me niścito varaḥ.  
Tasmin yadyasamāpte ca japyahome vibhāvasau  
yudhyeyan deva saṃgrāme tadā me syād vināśanam.  
(G.P. XXX, 12-14; sec. L. XXXVI, 13-15)

This is what I want: before going to battle with the intention of defeating my enemy, I will always worship the fire with offerings and sacred formulae. Then from the fire, a chariot yoked with horses will appear; riding that chariot, I shall be immortal—that is the boon I have set my mind on. But if I go to fight without completing my worship of the fire, then I shall meet my doom in battle.

Brahmā readily agrees. In his cosmic vision, he knows that Indrajit has condemned himself to death. There is a divine sense of humour in his acquiescence. The thoughts of Brahmā embrace centuries; his absolute fidelity to his word, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, does not curtail his ultimate dominion over his creation.

The cosmic order is in the hands of Brahmā. The power of Good and the power of Evil are both Brahmā's gifts and the whole evolution of the created universe is nothing but the realization of Brahmā's WORD. This may look like fatalism, but in fact, it is not. The dilemma between free will and determinism is a philosophical problem which never arose in the epic mind. The epic mind posits two facts which it considers as undeniable: Brahmā is the supreme Master and his Word sustains the whole universe; gods, demons and men, ignorant of the eternal scheme of things, act freely within the limited spheres of their knowledge. In retrospect, they may find that their actions have led them where they did not want to go; but when they acted, their motivation and their decision were fully theirs. In their short-sighted freedom, they bring to fruition the immutable design of Brahmā, without being aware of the far-reaching effect of their free undertakings.

*Evil as a Way to Liberation.*—The ultimate victory of Good over Evil might have been the final word of the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* concerning the meaning of Evil, were it not for a remarkable incident in the life of Rāvaṇa in the *kṛta-yuga*. The incident is related in the Southern version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.<sup>11</sup> It is again Agastya, whose mythical repertoire seems to be inexhaustible, who tells the story:

Rāvaṇa is in a meditative mood and he asks Sanatkumāra who among the gods is the most exalted. Sanatkumāra answers: "The greatest among the gods is Viṣṇu." Rāvaṇa goes on questioning: "What happened to the demons who were killed in battle? What happens to those who are killed by Viṣṇu?" This is the answer of Sanatkumāra:

ilayaṃ narendrāḥ krodho'pi  
devasya vareṇa tulyaḥ.  
(*ibid.* XXXIX, 18b-20)

Those who are killed by the other gods always reach the lowest heaven; then they fall again and are re-born on the earth: they are born and die with the good and bad fortune which they have earned in previous births. But all those who are killed by the discus-bearer Janārdana, the Lord of the three worlds, go from here to their own resting place, for the god's anger is itself a boon.

Rāvaṇa perceives with joy a possibility of liberation and begins to wonder how he could oppose Viṣṇu in a great battle. Sanat-kumāra enlightens him. He first celebrates the greatness and splendour of Viṣṇu. He shows him as the Lord whom devotion alone can placate:

Na sa śakyaḥ surair draṣṭum nāsuraḥ na ca paṇṇagai,  
yasya prasādam kurute sa vai tam draṣṭum arhati  
Na ca yajñaphalastūta na tapobhīṣa sañcītaiḥ  
śakyate Bhagavān draṣṭum na dāna na cejyayā.  
Tadbhaktaistadgataprāṇistaccittaitatparāyaṇaiḥ  
śakyate Bhagavān draṣṭum jñānanirdagdhaśkilviṣaiḥ  
(ibid. XL. 13-15)

Neither gods, nor demons, nor serpents can see him: he alone can see him to whom he grants his favour. The vision of the Lord can be obtained neither through the fruits of sacrifice, nor through accumulated penance, nor through gifts, nor through worship. His vision is reserved for those who are dedicated to him, whose lives are absorbed in him, whose minds are centred on him, who have chosen him as their sole aim, whose sins are burned in the fire of knowledge.

Unlike Brahmā and Śiva who are subject to the power of penance and sacrifice, Viṣṇu appears as the Gracious One who remains absolutely free in the bestowing of his gifts. Sanat-kumāra reveals to Rāvaṇa that the gracious Lord has chosen him, the violent and lustful demon, as the object of his favour. And this is the way in which Viṣṇu will fulfil his gracious design:

Kṛte yuge vyatīte tu mukhya tretāyugasya tu  
hitārthaṃ devamartyānām bhavitā nṛpavigrahaḥ.  
(ibid. XL. 17)

When the *kṛta-yuga* ends and when the *trētā-yuga* begins, he will take the form of a king for the welfare of gods and mortals.

We knew that Viṣṇu had decided to transform Bhṛgu's curse into a blessing. But we did not know that, beyond the defeat of Evil at the hands of Good, he had intended the very redemption of Evil itself. When Sītā was taken away by Rāvaṇa, the enmity between Rāma and Rāvaṇa reached that climax by which Rāvaṇa, in his relation to Rāma-Viṣṇu, became "*taccitta, tatparāyaṇa*". Agastya insists and tells Rāma:

The ultimate meaning of Evil, therefore, is to reveal the astounding scope of Viṣṇu's redemptive power. This takes us beyond the conflict between Good and Evil: both contesting forces, when centred on Viṣṇu, are called to merge in a common deliverance.

[ Looked at from this sublime vantage point, the whole *Rāmāyaṇa* is suffused with a new light. The pivot around which everything revolves is the Power of the Word. The Word of Brahmā, infallible and irreversible, sustains the whole cosmic order. The Word of gods, sages and men gives a structural consistency to the whole action of the epic. Within this cosmic and temporal structure, the redemptive power of Viṣṇu is gradually revealed. On the human level, the Word operates as the agent of immanent retribution. On the cosmic level, through the discernment with which Brahmā confers his boons, the Word brings about the conflict between Good and Evil and leads it to the final victory of Good. Both the human and the cosmic levels are sublimated and integrated into the redemptive purpose of Viṣṇu: they are the necessary medium through which Viṣṇu expresses and fulfils his design. Hence the *Rāmāyaṇa* can be understood on three different levels, according to the perception of the listener. Under the guidance of Agastya who impersonates epic memory, we have passed from one level to the other. The human level does not lose its reality when integrated with the cosmic level, but its limited truth is transcended. The cosmic level remains valid when subsumed under the redemptive level, but its meaning is transfigured.

The respective functions of the three supreme gods can now be seen in their true light. Brahmā's created universe is imperfect and ambivalent. But the wisdom of the Creator from whom both Good and Evil proceed, while giving free scope to the forces of Evil which are securely sheltered under the infallibility of his Word, provides for the ultimate triumph of Good. Siva and Viṣṇu, at first sight, appear as the patrons of the two conflicting powers. They seem to be engaged in a deadly struggle from which Viṣṇu will eventually emerge as the victor. Yet in the perspective of the redemptive design of Viṣṇu, Siva appears as the mysterious collaborator; by giving his support to the *rākṣasas* he builds up that opposition which will culminate in the confrontation of Rāma and Rāvaṇa, preparing thus the ground for the final resorption of Evil in the all-embracing divine grace of Viṣṇu. We may here go back to the scene in which the gods, harassed by the sons of Sukeśa, go and beg help from Siva. After telling them that he will not do anything against the demons, he gives them the following advice:

Ahaṃ tān na hanīṣyāmi jama vadhyā na te'surāḥ  
 kintu mantram pradāsyāmi yastu tān nihanīṣyati.  
 Evam eva samudyogam puraskṛtya suraṇaṣaḥ  
 gacchantu śaraṇaḥ. Viṣṇuḥ sa hanīṣyati rākṣasān.  
 (L. V. 9-10; G.P. VI, 10-11)

I am not going to kill them; the demons should not die at my hands; but I will give you a secret advice which will cause their doom: Let the gods, keen on their enterprise, seek the protection of Viṣṇu; he will kill the *rākṣasas*.

Siva knows that the last word is Viṣṇu's. His sympathy for the *rākṣasas*, his gift to Indrajit, his refusal to interfere against the demons, everything in his attitude is ultimately subordinated to the purpose of Viṣṇu. If in the trinity of the supreme gods, the opposition between Viṣṇu and Siva can be understood as the timeless prototype of the cosmic struggle between Good and Evil, it now appears, at a deeper level, as the timeless pattern of the saving grace of Viṣṇu transcending that conflict and inviting all the forces of violence and destruction to concentrate on him in order to find their final liberation.

In the fifth volume of his translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ralph T. H. Griffith, after completing the rendering of the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*, relegates the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* to an appendix. He deems it unnecessary to translate it and in fourteen pages gives a short summary of it, which he introduces with the following remarks:

Signor Gorresio has published an excellent translation of the Uttarakāṇḍa, in Italian prose, from the rendering current in Bengal, and Mr. Muir has epitomized a portion of the book in the Appendix of the Fourth Part of his Sanskrit Texts (1862). From these scholars I borrow freely in the following pages, and give them my hearty thanks for saving me much wearisome labour.<sup>12</sup>

Nineteenth century scholarship looked at the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the work of one individual poet and laid down as an unquestioned postulate that the epic story originated in some historical incident. Hence its twofold pursuit: to reject as interpolations whatever was judged not to be Vālmiki's composition and to eliminate from the narrative the proliferation of the supernatural in order to recapture the original historical fact. But for all its concern for historical truth, it failed to replace the epic in its true historical setting. By insisting on the individuality of the author, it blinded itself to the historical fact that the epic is the common patrimony of a community which looks in the past, not to codify some 'historical' event, but to discover in the human hero the reflection of a mythic prototype without which his human stature remains meaningless. In the words of Mircéa Eliade,

le caractère historique des personnages chantés par la poésie épique n'est pas en cause. Mais leur historicité ne résiste pas longtemps à l'action corrosive de la mythologie. L'événement historique en lui-même, quelle qu'en soit l'importance, ne tient pas dans la mémoire populaire et son souvenir n'enflamme l'imagination poétique que dans la mesure où cet événement historique se rapproche le plus d'un modèle mythique... La mémoire populaire retient difficilement des événements historiques authentiques et des figures 'individuelles', ayant une personnalité propre. La mémoire populaire évolue presque uniquement suivant les :



dimensions forgées par la pensée mythique: elle connaît des archétypes, des comportements exemplaires, elle ignore, ou peu s'en faut, les personnages historiques et les événements fortuits. Le personnage historique est assimilé à son modèle archétypal, tandis que l'événement est intégré dans la catégorie des Gestes mythiques. Pour se fixer dans la mémoire collective, les événements et les personnages de l'histoire se modifient jusqu'à ce qu'ils aient perdu leur authenticité et retrouvé les archétypes éternels du mythe.<sup>13</sup>

The humanistic prejudice of the nineteenth century is still lingering in many minds. C. M. Bowra, for instance, declares that "no poem can be regarded as truly heroic unless the major successes of the hero are achieved by more or less human means."<sup>11</sup> Previous to 'heroic' poetry, there is 'shamanistic' poetry in which man is caught between many unseen powers and influences. For Bowra the transition between shamanistic and heroic poetry is brought about by a transformation of social consciousness: "Once a society has come to see that man will do more by his own efforts than by a belief in magic, and to believe that such efforts do him credit, it alters its whole philosophy."<sup>12</sup> Of course Bowra never claims that genuine heroic poetry must totally eliminate the supernatural and mythical element. For him it is a question of dosage and that explains the vagueness of his expression: "the major successes of the hero are achieved by *more or less human means*." Having failed to perceive the essential relation of the human to the mythic, he has reduced their presence in ancient poetry to a mere juxtaposition. The major successes in the *Iliad* which, in Bowra's mind, are genuinely 'heroic' are the victory of Hector over Patroclus and the victory of Achilles over Hector. In the first instance, it is Zeus who orders Hector to pursue Patroclus. Then Apollo interferes: he knocks down the helmet of Patroclus, shatters his spear and robs him of his shield. Defenceless Patroclus is first struck by Euphorbus. Hector has only to give the *coup de grâce*. In the second instance, it is Athene who contrives the hero's victory. She disguises herself as Hector's brother Deiphobus in order to embolden him; she brings back to Achilles the spear which has missed its target; she removes from the side of Hector the false appearance of Deiphobus and leaves the spearless Hector at the mercy of Achilles. This is sufficient to show that Bowra's criterion to distinguish heroic from shamanistic poetry is arbitrary, since the evaluation of

the "more or less human means" remains a matter of personal taste.

We may now return to the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. What Griffith considered as "wearisome labour" has proved quite rewarding. Agastya, fulfilling the function of Calliope, has been a wonderful guide. The *tretā-yuga* is illumined by his intuitive sense of the mythic dimension. Following his inspiration we shall now consider the banishment and death of Sītā.

The curse of Bhṛgu—"there you will endure *for many years* separation from your wife (patni-viyogaṃ *bahuvārṣikam*)"—was still unfulfilled after Sītā had been rescued from Rāvaṇa's captivity and had successfully passed through the fire-ordeal. The way in which Rāma banished Sītā on the strength of malicious rumours about her purity, has been sharply criticized. We have heard Lakṣmaṇa expressing his indignation and today there are still many who prefer to Rāma's arbitrary cruelty the romantic choice of Edward VIII. Such comparisons, however, are misleading. In the epic context of the *Rāmāyaṇa* rumour is a form, however degraded, of the Word. However convinced Rāma may be of Sītā's fidelity, his personal conviction must give way before the faintest possibility of the rumour being founded. No risk can be taken with the Word. There were many good human reasons to ignore Daśaratha's word. In the case of Sītā's banishment, the human reasons were still stronger. The obedience of Lakṣmaṇa to Rāma is the epic expression of the submission of human reason to a higher mysterious norm which baffles human reason. Once Sumantra has revealed to Lakṣmaṇa the hidden purpose of Sītā's banishment, Lakṣmaṇa realizes that his human reaction, although sincere and genuine, was short-sighted.<sup>6</sup> Lakṣmaṇa is one of the most beautiful creations of the epic. His sense of human values is deep and spontaneous. Yet at the same time, he agrees to be at the service of Rāma whom he does not understand. There is in him an acceptance of a mystery which he cannot fathom. During the long years of exile in the forest, he lives a life of complete detachment: his wife is in Ayodhyā and his sole concern is to make Rāma and Sītā happy. Again it is Lakṣmaṇa whom Rāma entrusts with the painful mission of leading Sītā to exile, and we guess the struggle which must have tortured him during the fateful journey. His end is his supreme act of detachment. When Duvāsas angrily threatens him with the destruction of the whole dynasty if he

is not immediately taken to Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa has to choose between certain death and life at the cost of the downfall of his brothers. His decision sums up his whole life:

Ekasya maraṇam me'stu mā bhūt sarva-vināśanam  
iti buddhyā sa nīcintya Rāghavāya nyavedayat.  
(L. *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, CVII, 9; G.P. CV, 9)  
ie alone and save the others from destruction—so  
e up his mind and informed Rāma.

/This subordination of the human reality to a pattern which transcends all human judgment and values is at the core of the epic. It finds its full expression in what may be called the greatest scene of the epic, the death of Sitā.

After her rescue from Lankā, she is forced by Rāma's studied coldness to vindicate her purity. She takes the fire as witness to her fidelity. Her prayer is that of a woman who has been deeply hurt in her finest feelings: she asks the fire to spare her as an irrefutable proof of her chastity:

Karmaṇā manasā vācā yathā nāticaramyamaham  
Rāghavam sarvadharmajñam tathā mām pātu pāvakaḥ.  
(G.P. *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*, CXVI, 27)

As a proof that in my action, in my mind, in my speech I  
have never betrayed all-wise Rāma, may the fire spare me.

Fire in person leads her to Rāma and solemnly testifies to her integrity:

Abhravit tu tadā Rāmaṃ sākṣi lokasya pāvakaḥ  
eṣā te Rāma Vaidehī pāpam aśyam na vidyate.  
Naiva vācā na manasā naiva buddhyā na cakṣuṣā  
suvṛttā vṛttasautiryam na tvām atyacaracchubbā.  
(ibid. CXVIII, 5-6)

Then Fire, universal witness, said to Rāma:  
"Here is your Vaidehī; there is no sin in her—no sin in  
her speech, in her heart, no sin in her mind, in her eyes;  
as you put your pride in virtue, so she too is sinless and  
has never betrayed you."

Thus Sitā resumes her rightful place in the world of men. She is vindicated and we feel that she deserves her full share of happiness. But neither she nor Rāma is aware that a new tribulation is in the offing. Her first banishment was voluntary: she

had insisted on following her husband and had succeeded in overcoming all the objections of Rāma. Her second banishment, at the time of her advanced pregnancy, comes as a cruel blow. It is imposed upon her by the man whom she loves. Twelve long years she spends in a state of enforced widowhood. Then the time comes for her second vindication. Rāma wants her wife to take a solemn oath before the whole assembly of sages and kings. Vālmiki, with the authority of a long life of penance and piety, is ready to stake his whole existence on Sītā's integrity. Rāma does not doubt the sage's testimony but, for the sake of the assembly, he insists on the personal vindication of Sītā. The scene has an uncanny grandeur. Sītā, wearing the red garment of the ascetics, comes forward, her hands folded, her face bowed and her eyes fixed on the earth. This time we wish her the supreme triumph of her beautiful life. But our human hopes are shattered. Her oath is a vindication by which she cuts herself off from any human triumph:

Yathāhaṃ Rāghavād anyam manasāpi na cintaye  
tathā me Mādhavi devi vivaram dātum arhati.  
Manasā karmanā vācā yathā Rāmaṃ samarcaye  
tathā me Mādhavi devi vivaram dātum arhati.  
Yathaitat satyam uktam me vedmi Rāmāt paraṃ na ca  
tathā me Mādhavi devi vivaram dātum arhati.  
(G.P. *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, XC VII, 14-16; see L. XCIX,  
10 and note 5)

That in my heart I have thought for no one but Rāma,  
let Mother Earth testify by swallowing me up.  
That in my heart, in my action, in my speech I worship  
Rāma alone, let Mother Earth testify by swallowing me up.  
That this word of mine is true: I know none except Rāma,  
let Mother Earth testify by swallowing me up.

It is possible to explain this superb scene by imagining that Sītā has had time to reflect on the instability of human love. Her last vindication would be her farewell to the precarious joys of human existence. This supreme detachment would not be deprived of grandeur. Yet in the context of the epic, this cannot be the last word. The difference between the first and the second vindication of Sītā has its mythic justification. In the *kṛta-yuga*, Sītā was Vedavati, the ardent lover of Viṣṇu. Violated by Rāvaṇa, she swore that she would be re-born for the demon's doom. The *Yuddha-kāṇḍa* makes her curse effective and the fire-ordeal gives fulfilment to her long penance by restoring between her and

Rāma-Viṣṇu the loving union which had been interrupted for a short time by Rāvaṇa's lustful violence. But Sitā is also essentially needed for the fulfilment of Bhṛṅu's curse against Viṣṇu. The death of Rāvaṇa and the reunion of Rāma and Sitā do not reveal the fulness of the divine pattern. Sitā must be banished again and it is her second banishment which gives Sumantra the occasion to reveal Sitā's necessary function in the human life of Viṣṇu: Bhṛṅu's curse must be fulfilled in order that Viṣṇu may realize his redemptive design as revealed by Sanat Kumāra to Rāvaṇa in the *kṛta-yuga*. At the time of Sitā's second vindication the whole divine plan has been revealed and fulfilled. The human agencies which have contributed to its realization have played their part. Henceforth they become irrelevant. The pattern is complete and the dramatic departure of Sitā, whatever be its human motivation, announces the end of the human play.

One easily realizes how difficult it is for humanists to accept the epic vision. They struggle against it in their effort to preserve intact their ideal of human autonomy. The Indian tradition did not take long before it forsook the austere outlook of the epic. Sanskrit drama while borrowing most of its themes from the epic, has watered down its message. Bhavabhūti was not strong enough to digest the solid food of the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*. In his *Uttara-rāma-carita*, he has reduced the epic stature of Sitā to the handy size of a tearful romantic heroine. The poor thing must not be allowed to call on Mother Earth to swallow her up. She must be vindicated and enjoy the great reunion which his dramatic genius has so cleverly contrived. Once that happy end is assured, the dramatic poet can indulge without restraint in his taste for *karuṇa-rasa*. But all the tears and sighs and fainting fits of Bhavabhūti's Rāma and Sitā are nothing but a display of inconsequent sentimentality, when compared with the tragic dignity of the true Sitā, as she appears, tearless and humble, in her last invocation to Mother Earth.

In his *Raghuvamśa*, Kālidāsa has faithfully followed the narrative of the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*. In a *mahākāvya* he could hardly transform the original. But in his *Abhijñāna-sakuntala*, he has anticipated Bhavabhūti. The fifth act has preserved something of the epic flavour. It gives us an inkling of what Kālidāsa could have been if he had had the vision of a Sophocles. But his humanism stood in the way. In the seventh act, Sakuntalā is

almost a replica of the epic Sītā: she has given a son to Duṣyanta and has spent the years of separation in the austerity of a hermitage. Gradually all the doubts are dispelled. Mārīca reveals to Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā the hidden cause of their estrangement and tells Śakuntalā:

The good news of the happy reunion is sent to Kaṇva and the happy pair, with the child, start for the capital. The human situation holds the central place and the supernatural forces at work, especially Durvāsas' curse, have no other function than that of enhancing it with a delightful fringe of mystery.

All this should not be interpreted as a depreciation of the art of either Kālidāsa or Bhavabhūti. In their own sphere, they are great artists and their dramatic achievement is uncommon. But between the epic atmosphere and that of their dramas, the change of climate is undeniable. The mythic pattern which dominates the epic and gives it its unique meaning has been discarded. The vertical dimension inviting us to look far above the human scene in order to discover the timeless standards of the universal order has been replaced by the horizontal dimension according to which the human situation counts for itself and seeks its fulfilment within purely human limits. Epic Sītā symbolizes the acceptance by the human reality of its purely functional role in the universal scheme of things. Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā and Bhavabhūti's Sītā are living refusals of that functional character of human existence. Through them the human reality asserts its will to live its independent life.

This change of outlook in which Bowra sees the criterion by which heroic poetry is differentiated from shamanistic poetry, should rather be regarded as a sign of the decline of the epic age. Like the passage from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the transition between epic poetry and humanistic poetry is a gradual process. It does not happen suddenly and there is no clear line of demarcation between the death of the epic and the birth of humanism. But it is possible, by comparing the various achievements of epic poetry, to discern its various stages of development. Thus the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Iliad* represent two

erent moments in epic elaboration. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* taken in its integrity, we can recapture the operation of epic memory in its quest for the ultimate and timeless archetype which gives to the whole epic its deepest meaning. When we read the *Iliad*, we feel that epic memory as the quest of a believing community is no longer operating. From the immense canvas which was woven around the conflict between Achaeans and Trojans, Homer has chosen a small incident: the wrath of Achilles. His listeners are familiar with the whole epic story from the beauty contest of the three goddesses on the occasion of Peleus' marriage, till the downfall of Troy. He finds it unnecessary to repeat the whole narrative. He limits himself to a very small portion of the epic: fifty days at the beginning of the tenth year of the Achaean siege of Troy; and the central character of his narrative is a secondary hero, Achilles. He does what Māgha did with the *Mahābhārata* when he wrote his *mahākāvya*, *Śiśupāla-radha*, with this important difference, however, that Māgha had lost contact with the epic tradition and had selected the incident of Śiśupāla's death as a mere occasion to display his literary sophistication and virtuosity, whereas Homer remains vitally linked with the epic tradition of the Ionian society to which he belongs. In the *Iliad*, the mythological factor is much more than an embellishment. In spite of the emphasis laid on the human and psychological conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles, human existence preserves its epic functionality. Full-blooded men act and feel with the spontaneity of free agents; their passions are genuine and not contrived. But their vision is limited. They are vaguely conscious that a superior power is at work, using their short-sighted freedom for purposes which the human heart cannot fathom. Their lust for life contains an implicit acceptance of their 'teleological' blindness<sup>16</sup>, and their achievements always fail to give them that sense of self-sufficiency which full-fledged humanism claims as its right. This precariousness of the human condition is the epic message which Homer has inherited from the long tradition which preceded him. Several centuries after him, Sophocles will translate the same message in his tragedies. |

Ancient Greece has left us nothing of the long epic tradition from which the great tragedians of the fifth century B.C. derived a rich harvest of dramatic themes. Fragments exist of various epic cycles, some supplementing the Trojan theme from which

Homer took the subject of the *Iliad*, others centred on other cities and kingdoms. But Homer remains the most authentic witness of the long tradition without which neither the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey* could have been composed. Unfortunately nothing comparable to the *Rāmāyaṇa* has come down to us from the period preceding Homer. From Homer himself and from the little that remains of the abundant dramatic production of the fifth century B.C., it is possible to study the way in which epic memory operated in the Achaeon communities which were formed after the Dorian invasion. But such a study will remain conjectural since it will never have the textual witness which, in the case of the Indian Viṣṇuīte communities, the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* and especially the *Epic of Rāvaṇa* have so richly provided to those who choose to read them in the true epic perspective.

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, II, 484-493, trans. E. V. Rieu.

<sup>2</sup> *Aeneid*, VII, 641-646, my translation.

<sup>3</sup> E. O. James, *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East* (London, 1958), p. 307.

<sup>4</sup> Georges Dumézil, *Mythe et translation*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>6</sup> E. O. James, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>7</sup> John L. McKenzie, *Myths and Realities* (London, 1963), p. 67.

<sup>8</sup> The Baroda critical edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is still incomplete: the last portion published ends with the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*. We have used for this present work the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* of the Lahore critical edition published in 1947 (D.A.V. College Sanskrit Series, No. 20), which is based on the North-western recension. We have also consulted the popular edition published by the Gītā Press of Gorakhpur: *Śrīmad-vālmikiya-rāmāyaṇam* (Mūlamātram), n.d.

References to both texts will be abbreviated as follows: L.=Lahore edition; G.P.=Gītā Press edition. All translations mine.

<sup>9</sup> J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, 1955), p. 386, quoted by John L. McKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> The incident is given in the Lahore edition, pp. 156-158, as belonging to the Southern recension.



Ralph

116.316.

Mircea Eliade. "Littérature orale", in *Histoire des Littér*

mond Queneau, Vol. I (Paris, 1962), pp. 18-20, *passim*.

14 M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1961), p. 8.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

16 The expression is borrowed from John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek*  
*mythology* (London, 1962), p. 168: "... all men (the godlike *seer* is a partial  
ception) are teleologically blind. All life moves within a shell-like contain-  
ment of final ignorance and impotence."

When Shaw is praised as a writer of comedy nobody asks the question: is *Pygmalion* like the *Frogs* of Aristophanes or even like *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* of Molière? But when we estimate the achievement of any writer of tragedy the question inevitably asked is: is *The Strange Interlude* like *Antigone* or at least like *King Lear*? The answer is in the negative in both cases, but just the same Shaw is hailed as a great writer of comedy whereas O'Neill's claim to be a tragedian will always be challenged.

The difficulty arises from the relatively narrow sense of the word 'tragedy'. Whereas any play with a happy ending or a predominantly cheerful tone can be referred to as a comedy, every play with an unhappy ending or a predominantly serious tone is not necessarily regarded as a tragedy. Any play that calls itself a tragedy is expected to have the characteristics of the kinds of tragedy that flourished in the age of Sophocles.

Thanks to Shakespeare we do not any longer insist on the necessity of the chorus, on the observance of the unities or on the elimination of subplots and comic interludes. We do not any longer judge Shakespeare as though he were a Sophocles. There are no Rymers or Voltaires now to point out Shakespeare's deviations from decorum. We recognize that a play can be a tragedy in spite of all these deviations.

In Shakespeare there is no causal relationship between vice and suffering. The pain or punishment that the characters suffer is out of all proportion to their errors or sins. That is what makes the situations of *Lear* and *Hamlet* tragic in our view. And yet there is a radical difference between Shakespeare's tragedies and Greek or Roman tragedies. Although virtue is not rewarded, vice is always punished in Shakespeare. We are able to say this because in Shakespeare it is possible to divide the *dramatis personae* into the wicked and the virtuous. Whoever

is not for Hamlet is an agent of Claudius and therefore of the devil's party. Whoever is indifferent to Lear is on the side of Goneril and Regan and therefore morally reprehensible.

Now such a clear-cut moral division is alien to Greek and Roman tragedy where there is no villain. The protagonist is a victim of divine wrath. Take Hippolytus in the play named after him. He offends the goddess Aphrodite by his *hubris*. But he does so in the name of Artemis. Even when, as in *The Bacchae* of Euripides, the protagonist has no divine sanction for the defiance of Bacchus he does so in the name of sanity, law and chastity, aims worthy enough to deserve divine support. The *Antigone* of Sophocles may appear to be an exception. Antigone certainly claims that the laws of the gods are on her side but Creon's stubbornness is hardly tantamount to a crime. After all his concern is for the laws of the state. He cannot be equated with villains like Iago or Edmund. Oedipus is said to be punished for his *hubris* in demanding to know who in a great place has committed a great sin. But would we think any better of Oedipus if he were content to be a mere spectator of his people's calamity? Examples can be multiplied to illustrate my thesis that morally the situation in Greek tragedy is not an unambiguous one. This forms a striking contrast to Shakespeare in whom Iago, Edmund, Claudius and Macbeth are definitely evil.

I could formulate the difference by saying that whereas the tragic problem in Shakespeare is a moral one, in Greek tragedy it is a metaphysical or a religious one. In Shakespeare's world there is no scope for any doubt about who is right and who is wrong, whereas in Greek tragedy the ordinary sense of right and wrong is almost irrelevant. Take the Oresteian story. Agamemnon sinned by sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia at the time of embarking on the Trojan war. But it was the oracle of Apollo that advised him to do so. And if he had failed to carry out the orders of the oracle he would have been an unworthy leader of the host that went to Troy. The manner in which, in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Agamemnon defends his decision to his own daughter who is to be sacrificed, is quite convincing:

My daughter and my wife, I know what calls  
To me for pity and compassion, and  
What does not. I love my children!  
Did I not I would be mad indeed.  
Terrible it is to me, my wife, to dare

This ing. Terrible not to dare it.  
Here is my compulsion absolute:  
Behold the armies, girt about by the fleet,  
And with them over there, the kings of Greece  
With all their bronzen armor at their feet—  
None of them can sail to Ilium's towers  
Nor sack the famous bastion of Troy  
Until, as the prophet Calchas has decreed,  
I make you the victim of this sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

Now this I will not hide: ten years ago  
When you led Greece to war for Helen's sake  
You were set down as sailing  
Far off the course of wisdom.  
We thought you wrong, misguided,  
To keep morale from sagging  
In superstitious soldiers  
By offering sacrifice to stop the storm.<sup>2</sup>

The justice of the gods is inescapable and yet it is beyond the grasp of human beings because of its conflicting claims. In the *Electra* of Euripides Castor and Pollux descend from heaven when Orestes commits matricide. Castor's judgment is that their sister, i.e. Clytemnestra was guilty, but so is Orestes:

Justice has claimed her but you have not worked it  
As for Phoebus, Phoebus—yet he is my lord,  
silence. He knows the truth but his oracles were lies.<sup>3</sup>

We are not allowed to know what Phoebus himself  
his oracle.

The Chorus in *Agamemnon* informs us about a proverbial saying:

When Earth and Time were young,  
A simple ancient saw  
Phrased on the common tongue  
Declared that man's good fortune, once mature,  
Does not die childless, but begets its heir;  
That from life's goodness grows, by Nature's law,  
Calamity past cure  
And ultimate despair.

The speaker does not accept this view and holds sin responsible for grief but from the above analysis it would appear that to determine responsibility is by no means easy in Greek tragedy.

In spite of the profound difference between the moral values of Shakespeare and the Greek tragedians we nevertheless apply the term 'tragedy' to Shakespeare's serious plays, including history plays like *Richard III* and *Richard II* which Aristotle would have rejected out of hand.

What is true of Shakespeare and the Elizabethan dramatists is also true of Racine and perhaps of Corneille. On the face of it Racine was much closer to the Greek tragedians than Shakespeare and presumably better qualified to preserve the Greek spirit. He certainly observed the unities scrupulously. He could even employ the Chorus. He permitted no comic relief and reduced the number of characters to a minimum. And yet if we compare his *Phèdre* with the *Hippolytus* of Euripides we shall see how much he departs from the original. For example he gratuitously introduced the character of Aricie to provide love interest to the play. Now by introducing a real love affair in the life of Hippolyte he undermines the very foundation of the original story. Hippolytus in the Greek story had caused offence to Aphrodite by his exclusive devotion to Artemis. He had religiously abjured sex. In Racine the source of the tragedy is no longer the wrath of Aphrodite but the uncontrolled and uncontrollable passion of Phèdre. The Greek goddess becomes a figure of speech instead of being the principle behind all life, human and animal.

In spite of the radical change that Racine made to the spirit of his Greek originals, he is nevertheless considered to be a tragedian. In him, as in Shakespeare, the evil and the suffering of man is left unaccounted for. The ways of the gods are even more perplexing than in the Greek plays. For example the sea-god whose vengeance Thésée invokes against his son acts with tragic promptness. Racine does not even give the chance to Thésée to clear up the misunderstanding before the death of his son.

Towards the end of his career Racine created a new genre of tragedy, viz. Judaic tragedy. Instead of choosing the stories from pagan sources at least twice he dramatized stories from the Old Testament. This is a genre of tragedy largely unrecognized by the scholars. This serious lacuna in dramatic theory

arises from a purely doctrinaire reason. The ostensible reason given is that the Hebrew spirit is incompatible with the Greek. While the reason is unexceptionable the onus of explaining the success of Racine in *Athalie* and Milton in *Samson Agonistes* falls on the doctrinaire critics. Their failure lies in refusing to admit that while the Hebrew ethos is incompatible with the Greek, it is nevertheless capable of yielding a kind of tragedy. Perhaps we could call Hebrew tragedy by another name. We might be content to call it serious drama. But it seems strange that for a genre which includes such magnificent works we should not be willing to revise our definition of tragedy.

A critic as acute as Mr. George Steiner opens his book *The Death of Tragedy* with the flat assertion that "tragedy is alien to the Judaic sense of the world."<sup>5</sup> The reason for the supposed incompatibility between tragedy and the Judaic spirit is that Jehovah is just and that the order of the universe according to the Old Testament is accessible to reason. Mr. Steiner asserts: "But where there is compensation, there is justice, not tragedy."<sup>6</sup> This is an assertion with which Aristotle would have agreed. In defence of his view Mr. Steiner adds:

Tragic drama arises out of precisely the contrary assertion: necessity is blind and man's encounter with it shall rob him of his eyes, whether it be in Thebes or in Gaza.<sup>7</sup>

A reader may here be swept by Mr. Steiner's eloquence into forgetting that the parallel between Oedipus and Samson disproves the assertion made earlier, viz. that the tragic sense is incompatible with Judaic tradition.

It is not that Mr. Steiner wishes to avoid facing the critical problem. He is fully aware of the problem. Indeed he tries partially to resolve the difficulty. For example about *Samson Agonistes* he says:

Like all Christian tragedy, a notion in itself paradoxical, *Samson Agonistes* is in part a *commedia*. The reality of Samson's death is drastic and irrefutable; but it does not carry the major or final meaning of the play. As in *Oedipus at Colonus*, the work ends on a note of solemn transfiguration, even of joy.<sup>8</sup>

I might add that it is only an accident that *Oedipus Rex* rather than *Oedipus Coloneus* has come to be regarded as the typical

Similarly about Racine's *Athalie* Mr. Steiner

In *Athalie*, as in the *Suppliants*, a place of sanctuary is preserved against incursions of violence. One of the last of the great formal tragedies in western literature seems to look back explicitly to the first. . . . The play is tragic because we know that Joad's vision will be accomplished and Joas will become an evil king. But beyond the blackness of the fate of Israel is the light of the greater redemption. In his prophetic trance, the High Priest sees a new Jerusalem arising from the desert.<sup>11</sup>

Mr. Steiner fails to admit that these magnificent plays refute his earlier formulation that the tragic sense and the Judaic sense are incompatible. There is in *Samson Agonistes* and *Athalie* a clear-cut distinction of the *dramatis personae* between the Jews on the one hand and the worshippers of Dagon or Baal on the other. There is no doubt about the final overthrow of evil. And yet it has to be admitted that if these plays are not tragedies then it is very difficult to describe them. There is no satisfactory alternative to the word 'tragedy'.

I would go a step further and assert that not only Judaic tragedy but even Christian tragedy is possible. In plays ranging from *Doctor Faustus* and *Macbeth* to *St. Joan* and *Murder in the Cathedral* we recognize that the spirit is quite different from that of Greek tragedy and yet what other name can we call these plays by?

In theory Christianity is even more untragic than Judaism. Indeed Christian ethos is unheroic, which Judaic ethos is not. The virtue of fortitude in adversity, of patient suffering is incompatible with heroic literature, that is to say with both tragedy and epic. If there had been no Milton perhaps the idea of a Christian epic would have appeared self-contradictory. Fortunately it is always possible in a mythology as rich and varied as the Hebrew-Christian mythology to find material for most literary forms.

If we consider the attempts at writing tragedy in the twentieth century in the light of these observations, we find that they fall into two broad categories—those which do not model themselves on Greek tragedy and those which do. To the first category belong plays like *Murder in the Cathedral*, *St. Joan* and *Riders*

to the Sea. They are successful without being like *The Eumenides* of Aeschylus or the *Oedipus* of Sophocles. They nevertheless deserve to be called tragedies because they approximate fairly closely to the tragic experience. To call them tragedies is as proper as to call the plays of Shakespeare or Racine tragedies. The other variety consists of plays like *The Family Reunion* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, which attempt to shape modern experience into the mould of Greek tragedy. These plays fail because Greek literary forms, especially the epic and tragedy, are inseparable from the religious beliefs of ancient Greece. This was brought home to T. S. Eliot several years after composing *The Family Reunion*. He made the mistake of borrowing certain features of *The Eumenides* of Aeschylus. In his lecture "Poetry and Drama" (1950) he confessed:

But the deepest flaw of all, was in a failure of adjustment between the Greek story and the modern situation. I should either have stuck closer to Aeschylus or else taken a great deal more liberty with his myth. One evidence of this is the appearance of those ill-fated figures, the Furies. . . They never succeeded in being either Greek goddesses or modern spooks. But their failure is merely a symptom of the failure to adjust the ancient with the modern.

But in fairness to Eliot it must be acknowledged that his instinct was sound in apprehending that the profoundest parallel between the Greek religion and the Christian is the belief in inherited guilt. The sins of Orestes are traced back as far as his ultimate ancestor Tantalus. This is almost as good as original sin.

Eliot learnt from his failure in this play. In his next play he concealed the parallel with the *Alcestis* of Euripides quite successfully. The relative feebleness of this and the succeeding plays of Eliot does not concern us here because his failure cannot be ascribed to any attempt to write in the vein of the ancient Greeks.

O'Neill was far more prolific as a dramatist than Eliot. His dramatic career spans a period of nearly forty years, i.e. from 1916 to 1953. His experiments with the tragic form were bolder. I shall discuss briefly the more significant features of his relatively successful plays.



Quite early he came under the influence of Nietzsche. Presumably he owed to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* the insistence on the kinship between tragedy and the god Dionysus. Although references to the Dionysiac cult are frequent in O'Neill's plays it was in *Lazarus Laughed* (1927) that O'Neill presented the religion of Dionysus directly in contrast to three opposing religions: Roman paganism, Judaism and Christianity. The play is interesting for a student of dramatic form because the message of Dionysus has been conceived in the spirit of a morality play. There is an absence of any tension recognizable as dramatic. O'Neill makes the mistake of stripping the Dionysiac cult of both drunkenness and insanity. The laughter of the Greek god was certainly not tame and innocuous if Euripides is to be believed. Lazarus appears to be asking: "Death, where is thy sting?" The reader of O'Neill—and presumably the audience—asks: "Tragedy, where is thy sting?" It is interesting to compare O'Neill's interpretation of Dionysus with Shaw's in *Major Barbara*. Shaw, however, gave a comic turn to the Dionysiac element by pointing to the Dionysiac appeal of the Salvation Army. He did not crowd the stage with choruses as O'Neill did.

In another play *The Great God Brown* (1926) one of the major characters is called Dion Anthony, presumably a cross between Dionysus and St. Anthony. But the symbolism of the play is mixed up. For one thing Pan and Dionysus are confused. Another complication is that Dion who is supposed to represent Pan turns into Mephistopheles. The courtesan visited by both Billy Brown and Dion Anthony is called Cybel, named after the Earth goddess, representing Mother Earth, and yet it is Margaret, the wife of Dion, who stands for motherhood.

Another feature of Greek drama that O'Neill experimented with was the use of masks. Characters in many of O'Neill's plays wear masks. In *The Great God Brown* masks are central to the play. The intention of O'Neill presumably was to stress the functional or symbolic role of the characters instead of their individuality. This was a deliberate break with realism on the stage. To that extent it was an attempt to return to Greek drama. But O'Neill's characters use masks to conceal their real personality. O'Neill's intention was to unmask the characters. This gave O'Neill a means of probing the psychological depths of his characters. But as Mr. Eugene Waith has pointed out, this object was more effectively achieved in the final plays like *The Iceman*

*Cometh* and *The Long Day's Journey into Night* where the characters do not wear any masks.<sup>10</sup>

I shall now consider O'Neill's most ambitious attempts at writing tragedy. At one end is *Mourning Becomes Electra* which is strictly modelled on the Oresteian trilogy of Aeschylus, at the other end are plays like *The Strange Interlude* and *The Long Day's Journey into Night* which borrow the tragic sense from the Greeks without borrowing the paraphernalia. In between falls *Desire under the Elms* which is an attempt partly to recreate Greek tragedy and partly New England of the nineteenth century.

At the heart of O'Neill's great plays is the inherited guilt of the main characters. Like Eliot he grasped that the way to give a tragic dimension to crime is to make it appear inevitable, inevitable because of inescapable heredity. The characters in O'Neill do not inherit their sins from Adam and Eve as Eliot's do. They inherit them from their immediate ancestors. The problem was to invest these ancestors with the dignity of "Pelops' line, or the race of Troy divine."

In *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) unfortunately the parallels with Aeschylus are forced. The father is a Brigadier-General because Agamemnon was a king and general. Just as Clytemnestra was the first to read the signals announcing the end of the Trojan war, Lavinia is the first to know about the end of the American Civil War, the dialogue of the townsfolk is supposed to parallel the chorus of Greek tragedy, there is even a suggestion of the Furies in the final play of the trilogy (*The Haunted*, I.i).

O'Neill's treatment of Greek models offers an interesting contrast with that of the modern French playwright Jean Anouilh. Whereas O'Neill looks for modern American parallels to Greek situations, often adapting modern situations to suit the Greek story, Anouilh takes the Greek myth and adapts it to modern situations. Whereas O'Neill is guilty of archaizing nineteenth century New England, Anouilh is guilty of modernizing ancient Greece. Antigone's nurse makes coffee for breakfast, the Guard chews tobacco as an antidote to the stink from the corpse of Polyneices, Creon informs Antigone that her dead brothers used to visit nightclubs, Creon's wife Eurydice is said to be busy "with her garden, her preserves, her jerseys."

Neither O'Neill nor Anouilh produces a truly Greek tragedy but whereas Anouilh's deviations are deliberate, O'Neill's deviations are unintended and therefore tantamount to failure. The defiance of Anouilh's Antigone springs not so much from her concern for the divine law as from her abhorrence for mundane happiness and mediocre life (rather like Celia in Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*). These departures from Sophocles alter the character of the tragedy but there is no discrepancy between Anouilh's intention and his achievement. O'Neill's deviations on the contrary, such as Lavinia's incestuous attachment to her father or Orin's to his mother are intended to make the meaning of the Greek story explicit in the light of modern psychology. By making Lavinia and Orin consciously incestuous O'Neill has stripped the Greek story of its tragic character. Much of the power of the original story lies in what is left unstated. That gives to each generation the opportunity to interpret the story in terms acceptable to them. To make a myth explicit in clinical terms is to turn it into a psychological case. The most successful innovation of O'Neill in my opinion is the identification between the South Sea Islands and the mother in Orin's mind. But O'Neill's insight into the human psyche is better illustrated in *The Strange Interlude* where he is not burdened with the weight of any Greek myth.

In one respect the vision of O'Neill can be compared with Racine's. *Mourning Becomes Electra*, like the *Phèdre* of Racine, is a tragedy of psychological compulsion. In O'Neill's play Lavinia hates her mother Christine and Orin hates his father Ezra Mannon, and yet in spite of their best efforts they turn out to be the spit images of their hated parents. In place of the gods and goddesses whose presence broods over the Greek stage there are these uncontrollable psychic forces whose victims the characters are. Here is an equivalent of the supernatural machinery of the ancient Greeks. Here, and not in the social institutions, I might add. (That incidentally is why the *Ghosts* of Ibsen gets much closer to the tragic feeling than *A Doll's House*.)

*Desire under the Elms* (1924) is a play in which O'Neill has tried to unite two themes, viz. the hold of land over a farming community and the theme of incest. To the second theme O'Neill gives a Greek colouring. This part of the play is modelled on the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. Here the Greek pattern is not so obviously imposed as in *Mourning Becomes Electra* because an

incestuous desire on the part of a step-mother is almost archetypal, especially when the mother happens to be much closer in age to her step-son than to her husband. O'Neill gives a psychological twist to the Abbie-Eben relationship by making Abbie a substitute for Eben's dead mother. The theme has been turned into an illustration of a psychology text-book.

Fortunately the play has been saved by O'Neill's handling of the other theme. There is no doubt in my mind that Ephraim Cabot's attachment to the farm is the more impressive of the two themes in the play. The parallel of Ephraim with a Hebrew patriarch is more convincing than with his equivalent in Greek mythology, i.e. Theseus, the slayer of Minotaur. His contempt for the easy gold of California and his pride in being able to "make corn sprout out of stones" rings true. The reason is not far to seek. The world of the Old Testament is closer to nineteenth century New England than the world of the daughter of Minos and Pasiphae. Thus if *Desire under the Elms* illustrates O'Neill's failure to write a Greek tragedy it also demonstrates his success in writing a Judaic tragedy.

In *The Strange Interlude* (1928) there is a ghost but O'Neill was wise in avoiding the kind of ghost who seeks revenge on his enemies through the agency of his surviving relations. The ghost of Gordon Shaw is comparable neither to the ghost of Clytemnestra in the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus nor to the ghost of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's play. He is simply a projection of Nina's imagination, in some ways comparable to the lover in Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*. Before the action opens the father is supposed to have prevented his daughter's marriage to Gordon. Gordon got killed in the World War as the father feared. Nina marries Gordon's friend Sam Evans. Her fulfilment in marriage depends on her attaining motherhood. But she has to contrive an abortion because there is a curse on the Evans family—their children are struck with insanity. So instead she bullies her doctor Edmund Darrell into cohabiting with her. The product of their union is brought up under the shadow of her first love Gordon Shaw. To the great disappointment of the mother the son grows up to be emotionally much closer to his supposed father Sam Evans than to Nina or his real father Edmund Darrell.

The play begins with her romantic illusions about Gordon Shaw whom she is unable to marry; it ends with the shattering

of her illusion that her son Sam Evans will grow into the spiritual heir of her lover. Nina realizes that she has to endure life without any spiritual companionship. To that extent the play is effective. The theme of the curse on the house of Evans has been introduced quite gratuitously to offer a parallel to the curse on the house of Atreus. This, however, is not central to the play.

*The Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941) is another drama of psychological compulsion. The father's meanness is compulsive. He holds his early poverty responsible for it. The mother's addiction to morphine is compulsive. Her husband engaged a quack doctor to relieve her of pain after the birth of her second son. Thereafter she became a drug-addict. Her husband's late hours and his mania for economy prevented her from ever making her feel at home after her marriage. This provided her with an excuse for seeking escape from reality. She wishes to erect a screen between herself and life. Incidentally there is correspondence between the fog outside and the fog in Mary's mind—a touch characteristic of O'Neill's poetic power. But to return to the theme of psychological compulsion, their elder son did not achieve success as an actor because he turned into a dipsomaniac. The younger son is a poet in the making but he is consumptive. "None of us," says Mary, "can help the things life has done to us."<sup>11</sup> In their own eyes none of them is to blame for the mess that they have made of their lives. And yet we cannot absolve any of them of all blame. In this respect the situation reminds us of a dialogue in *The Trojan Women* of Euripides. In the course of this dialogue Helen says in self-defence that the woes of Troy were owing to the goddess Aphrodite. Hecuba responds:

Nonsense. My son was handsome beyond all other men. You looked at him, and sense went Cyprian at the sight, since Aphrodite is nothing but the human lust.<sup>12</sup>

In O'Neill, as in Euripides, there is a kind of moral ambiguity which lends pathos to the situation. The reason why it fails to be a great play is not only that there is no equivalent to the malice of Neptune, Juno and Pallas against the house of the Tyrones as there was against the house of Priam.<sup>13</sup> The real reason is O'Neill's partiality for psychologizing. The psyche of each of the characters is in turn placed on the dissection table. This is true of most of the longer plays of O'Neill. The second

act of *The Strange Interlude*, for example, consists of Edmund Darrell analyzing Nina's neurosis and prescribing a cure for her. (It might be observed parenthetically that Eliot in *The Cocktail Party* also submits all the major characters to a psychiatric examination.) Nina's "uncle" Charles Marsden is a textbook case of mother-fixation.

The result of this psycho-analysis human predicament is explained as "the spirit of Socrates", as Nietzsche sense of tragedy:

To Socratic man the one noble and truly human occupation was that of laying bare the workings of nature, of separating true knowledge from illusion and error. So it happened that ever since Socrates the mechanism of concepts, judgments, and syllogisms has come to be regarded as the highest exercise of man's powers, nature's most admirable gift.<sup>14</sup>

I just quoted from a passage in *The Trojan Women* of Euripides. A little before Hecuba exposes Helen's excuse, she prays to Zeus in the following manner:

O power, who mount the world, wheel where the world runs  
O mystery of man's knowledge, whosoever you be,  
Zeus named, nature's necessity or mortal mind,  
I call upon you: for you walk the path none hears  
Yet bring all human action back to right at last.<sup>15</sup>

Although Nietzsche did not think highly of Euripides as a tragedian, Euripides appears to have summed up in this passage the tragedian's attitude to the gods. Man's knowledge does not add up to certainty. The ways of Zeus will remain shrouded in mystery. We do not know whether Zeus is another name for nature's necessity or whether he has a mind. Even if he is not mindless we are not sure whether his mind is like the mind of mortals. What is certain is that Zeus is omnipotent. Hecuba's hope that Zeus "will bring all human action back to right at last" may not be fulfilled because the "mind" of Zeus is immortal. What appears right to Zeus may not appear right to us.

The main reason why in my opinion O'Neill in his greatest plays falls short of his aim is that he expounds too much (a vice incidentally from which Shaw also suffers). But in fair-

ness it must be added that he falls short because he aims too high. Judged by any standard except those of the great masters, O'Neill's achievement is very great.

<sup>1</sup> Trans. Charles R., Walker, ll. 1254 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Trans. Philip Vellacot, ll. 801 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Trans. E. T. Vermeule, ll. 1244 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Ll. 750 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *The Death of Tragedy* (London, 1961), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> P. 5.

<sup>8</sup> P. 31.

<sup>9</sup> P. 100.

<sup>10</sup> See "Eugene O'Neill: An Exercise in Unmasking", in *O'Neill: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Gassner (New Jersey, 1964), pp. 29-41.

<sup>11</sup> P. 53.

<sup>12</sup> Trans. Richmond Lattin

<sup>13</sup> See *Acneid*, ll.

<sup>14</sup> *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. F. Golffing (New York, 1956), p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> Ll. 884 ff.

USES OF CONSCIENCE AND ALIENATION  
THE TREATMENT OF THE DOCTOR AS AN OUTSIDER  
ALBERT CAMUS AND MANIK BANDYOPADHYAY

As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods;  
They kill us for their sport. —*Lear*, IV.i

The doctor—God's enemy. He fights against death.  
—Camus, *Notebooks*

A man becomes an outsider when he becomes alive to  
certain questions. —Colin Wilson, *The Outsider*

Just as *L'Étranger* has often been claimed to be the most important piece of European fiction in the forties, *Putulnacher Itikatha* (*The Puppets' Tale* in English) has been accepted as the most powerful Bengali novel of its time. It is therefore natural that one might feel tempted to select Albert Camus and Manik Bandyopadhyay as representative novelists from the two realms of culture in order to develop a comparative perspective. But it is not from such a mechanical point of view that I have chosen to make a comparative analysis of the characters of Rieux and Shashi, but because while re-reading *Putulnacher Itikatha* recently, I was reminded of a similar personality, a similar situation, and a very similar treatment of the problem of man's distance in the face of death. Shashi brought Rieux to my mind. Hence we agree to look upon *The Plague* as an allegorical novel written in an exquisite realistic style with no gory detail overlooked, and also to accept *Putulnacher Itikatha* as a novel with clear allegorical significance cleverly disguised under realism. The basic schematic similarity of the two novels becomes sharply noticeable.

These are two tales of human will posed against the huge conspiracy of a divine will. The human individual is seen as consciously refusing to recede into the background while the impersonal social machinery takes over. Such individuals are now labelled as 'outsiders', those who cannot, and will not accept the



existing order of things, who have a vision of a perfect world. The outsider's revolt is expressed in a total refusal to conform, either through a passive withdrawal from, or in active rebellion against the philistine world. In both cases the individual gradually becomes alienated from his surroundings, then from his hopes and his ideals, even from his body, sometimes. A strange detachment ensues from his awareness, and marks him out as 'different'.

(Our protagonists, Shashi and Rieux, are doctors. The basic problem faced by them is the ultimate futility of the individual's efforts to change the vast mechanism of imperfection in a system governed by death.) The stories of their lives are told in a cold, deadpan style, without ever reaching a climax. (They stand and observe life, mainly in the form of death, with a certain objectivity and detachment that is characteristic of the twentieth century intellectual protagonist. Both are introverts, constantly trying to maintain a balance between reason and emotion by rationally analyzing the emotional situations. But they do not suffer from a problem of identity, because both identify themselves with their profession.) Shashi and Rieux honestly declare 'health' to be their primary concern in life. (Their motto is to cure the ailing, to defy death.)

And yet, both the novels open with death—the doctor watching death as a fait accompli. Rieux witnesses a dead rat, Shashi a dead man—but the difference is not much in the long run. (Death is the doctor's daily enemy, and his constant companion. He fights death knowing it to be ultimately a losing battle since mortality is a disease no doctor can cure. The profession of the doctor, therefore, is to counteract God, to challenge fate, to try to negate the inevitable.) Like the punishment of Sisyphus who endlessly rolls a huge rock to the top of a mountain whence the stone falls down again of its own weight to the bottom of the ill, the doctor's task is to face an endless series of defeats. Sisyphus had put death in chains and the gods could think of "no more dreadful a punishment than futile and hopeless labour."<sup>1</sup> But, with Homer, Camus too believed Sisyphus to be the "wisest and most prudent of mortals"<sup>2</sup>. He represents Camus' "Absurd Hero"<sup>3</sup>. Our doctors, in challenging mortality, voluntarily take upon themselves the punishment of Sisyphus.)

Both Shashi and Rieux are aware of the nature of their "futile and hopeless labour", Rieux more than Shashi, as we find in the

final analysis, yet both apply themselves passionately to the impossible task of correcting an incorrigible universe, raging a losing battle against the all-pervasive evil to which the philistine world has submitted itself irretrievably.

*The Puppets' Tale* (1936) and *The Plague* (1947) present the same world-view seen through the eyes of a physician involved with the problem of existence. What is important for us to remember here is the fact that Manik Bandyopadhyay's novel came out in Calcutta more than a decade before Camus published his in Paris. Even *The Outsider* came six years after *The Puppets' Tale*. While there is no question of Camus' knowing Bengali, there could have been hardly any possibility of Manik Bandyopadhyay to have any familiarity with the Existentialist philosophy as early as in 1936. In fact he never showed any interest in the Existentialists, the philosophy that he developed an interest in, later on, was Marxism, after joining the Anti-Fascist Writers Association in 1942. Dostoevsky was perhaps the only writer connected with the history of today's outsider hero whom Manik Bandyopadhyay knew. For a person not initiated in Existentialist philosophy, Shashi is a magical creation. Or, should we say, it is only one proof of Manik Bandyopadhyay's intrinsically modern temperament? This is not going to be a study of intercultural influences, as there is no such scope in the case of Camus and Manik Bandyopadhyay as far as I can see, but as a case of parallel study the scope is vast and outstanding.

If we read *The Plague* and *The Puppets' Tale* side by side the parallel currents of thought become quite obvious. At places it seems almost possible to replace one set of speeches with another. We shall try to notice the striking features of similarity here, as well as point out where they differ and why. In fact, in my opinion, *The Plague* could easily be called *The Puppets' Tale*; it would take nothing away from the inner connotation as intended by Camus. In his notebooks as early as in 1941 Camus was jotting down ideas about the composition of a novel using the plague in Oran as a symbol. "A philosopher there, is writing 'an anthology of insignificant actions'. He will keep a diary of the plague from this point of view."<sup>4</sup> *The Puppets' Tale* too is but an 'anthology of insignificant actions'. The magnificent quotation from Defoe that Camus uses at the beginning of his novel, could have been used equally effectively at the beginning

of *The Puppets' Tale*. It would have provided the same cue to its readers: "It is as reasonable to represent one kind of imprisonment by another, as it is to represent anything that really exists by that which exists not."<sup>5</sup> We have already noticed that both the novels are written as chronicles, 'Itikatha' is not a 'tale', it is a 'historical tale', a 'chronicle'. The writers do not try to dramatize the situations, but play it down, trying to use an impersonal style. Manik Bandyopadhyay's use of the chaste Bengali rather than the colloquial, achieves this effect carefully. Camus, too, is conscious about this aspect of his work, we find him mentioning it repeatedly in his notebooks.<sup>6</sup>

In *The Plague* we find Rieux faced with a destructive situation which is well beyond human control. The plague has captured the city and is destroying all that is good in it. There is no escape, death is taking over the controls from life. Men and women of Oran are surrendering to it because they are already spiritually dead.<sup>7</sup> "The plague in Oran sets up its mechanism of destruction by attacking in man what defines man's humanity."<sup>8</sup> Germaine Brée explains the nature of this evil elsewhere: "From the same human indifference of *L'Étranger* the plague... draws its pestilential power."<sup>9</sup> It is this very same "human indifference" that overwhelms Shashi in the doomed village of Gaodia. Shashi, bright and young, returns from the city with scientific knowledge hoping to bring light and fresh air to his native village where the mind and the body are equally sick throughout the year. But he is soon disillusioned by the inhabitants' general indifference to good and evil, their refusal to accept improvement. It is a static situation, and no change is possible.

Our first encounter with Shashi, the doctor, is at a moment when his role is reversed: we see him discovering the thunder-burnt body of a neighbour. The terrible irony of the doctor entering his village carrying a corpse killed by providence gives us a clue to the main theme right away. "The god of the heavens cast a playful eye,"<sup>10</sup> and Haru Ghosh stood transfixed to a tree, as immobile as the tree itself, and charred to the tips of his hair. All that Shashi, the city-trained doctor, can do for him is to carry the body to his dear ones. Instead of conquering death, the doctor begins his career already conquered by death. Instead of bringing life into the village, he comes as an emissary of death. The insignificance of the human individual is established beyond doubt in the very beginning of Shashi's story.

(Just as Rieux cannot control an epidemic that has firmly gripped the town, Shashi has no control over the evils that exist in his village.) Instead of using one central symbol for the all-pervasive evil as Camus does in *The Plague*, or Melville in *Moby Dick*, Manik Bandyopadhyay takes a series of situations experienced by Shashi to depict the pattern of death and decay. Each situation shows Shashi's effort to save, to bring about a change for the better,—like the plague patients Rieux tries to protect or cure—and the result in both cases is a realization of the powerlessness of human will. Lack of awareness is the main enemy that Shashi has to fight. Stagnation is the primary evil in the village of Gaodia. (Like the doomed people of Oran the people of Gaodia do not know and do not wish to know the nature of reality outside their closed, rancid minds.) Shashi tirelessly tries to perform that impossible task. "To try to teach hygiene to the whole village is too big a task, he might leave that out, but what about his home? . . . Outside he is a hired soldier to fight death. And in his own home the atmosphere is unhealthy, death reigns supreme."<sup>10</sup> Trying to fight the reign of death at home, Shashi becomes unpopular. Members of his household refuse to wake up, they refuse to open their windows to health and fresh air.

Shashi, like a divine messenger, knocks on their doors: "Get up! All of you! No more sleep! Why must you sleep in the daytime?"<sup>11</sup> It sounds like the chanting of the Upanishads: "Utthisthata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata!"<sup>12</sup> But the sleepy people of Gaodia have no intention of learning, they have no notion of their human rights, they are not aware of the gifts that life has to offer. "Shashi must be out of his mind. What's the use of health to us?"<sup>13</sup> But in spite of their taunts Shashi makes desperate efforts to enforce his medical notions: "The air already smells foul. Open at least one window, or I'll have the ceiling trimmed tomorrow so that the stale air can go out." "Would you have us die of pneumonia?" is the answer he gets. But Shashi does not give up: "What are you doing? You'll die of suffocation. No fresh air can come in because you have closed all the windows." "They laughed," comments Manik Bandyopadhyay, "let them breathe the roomful of air as long as possible, and let suffocation come later if it cared to do so."<sup>14</sup>

In Oran, suffocation cared to do so. (Camus writes in his notebooks: "I wish to express by means of the plague the feeling of

suffocation from which we all suffered and the atmosphere of threat and exile in which we lived. At the same time I want to extend my interpretation to the notion of existence in general.) As Germaine Brée brilliantly puts it: "The people of Oran, as Dr. Rieux describes them, have little sense of reality, of either good or evil, and this allows the plague to make rapid progress among them. Unopposed... it spreads... occupying a city which because of its lack of awareness, is already conquered." (This is true of the situation in Gaodia as well.) "The plague is not a symbol of an outer, abstract evil, it merely applies and carries out to their logical limits the values implicit in the unconscious attitudes of the citizens of Oran."<sup>16</sup> Now let us see Manik Bandyopadhyay describing the villagers of Gaodia through the eyes of Shashi: "He realized... they were quite content to suffer and to die needlessly of disease... Their way of life was totally incompatible with health and wholesome vitality. They are storehouses of distorted perceptions and narrow-mindedness. There was something about them that reminded one of a swamp with its fetid smells, its perpetual miasma, its cover of green scum... poisonous mushrooms... They were quite incapable of leading vigorous and warm-hearted lives."<sup>17</sup> Hence, "by and by, Shashi abandoned his attempts to improve the health of the members of his household. He was very resentful at first, but gradually he grew wiser."<sup>18</sup>

Rieux, too, laments about the failure of the human individual to change the scheme of things, as he learns from experience. "I was young then, and I was outraged by the whole scheme of things, or so I thought. Subsequently, I grew more modest." But what is of the utmost importance in Rieux's case is that Rieux "never managed to get used to seeing people die."<sup>19</sup> After all a doctor cannot annihilate death, he can only postpone it. But he must never get 'used' to seeing people die, for when he does so, he will cease to be a doctor, which means for Rieux and Shashi, to cease to be.

(Both Rieux and Shashi justify their existence to themselves by setting themselves up as champions of health, agents of life against death. They share the view that death shapes the scheme of things, it is the ultimate reality, therefore happiness and misery are equally meaningless in the end, since Being must inevitably end in Nothingness. When looked at from this point of view, the world loses its conventional system of values, words

like happiness and sorrow, success and failure, good and evil, even life and death lose their significance.)

There is, however, one significant point of difference in the attitudes of Rieux and Shashi. Rieux, when he encounters the plague, has already learnt his lesson from life, and gets engaged ('engagé') without any illusion of success. Shashi, on the other hand, merely starts his lesson in life and by the end of the book he is disillusioned and resigned. Rieux, therefore, is a movement forward from the position of Shashi. We shall discuss their points of departure later. Let us first examine what they have in common. ✓

We have already noticed that both justify their existence by being devoted to their profession. "Rieux believed himself to be on the right road—in fighting against creation as he found it." Tarrou remarks: "So that's the idea you have of your profession?" Rieux replies: "More or less... For the moment I know this: there are sick people and they need curing. What's wanted now is to make them well. I defend them as best as I can, that's all." Tarrou: "Against whom?" Rieux: "I haven't a notion, Tarrou; I assure you I haven't a notion... Since the order of the world is shaped by death, mightn't it be better for God if we refuse to believe in Him and struggle with all our might against death?" Tarrou: "Yes. But your victories will never be lasting." Rieux: "Yes, I know that. But it is no reason for giving up the struggle." Tarrou: "... I now can picture what this plague must mean for you." Rieux: "Yes. A never-ending defeat."<sup>20</sup>

Now let us see how Shashi looks upon this profession of a never-ending defeat. "It was his business to cure disease, and to restore the ailing to health. Yet, the truth, in the final analysis, added up to this: to ail and to be cured, to cure and not to cure,—in the long run these were all the same to the patient as well as to Shashi. Such thoughts often roused strange feelings in him."<sup>21</sup> In the long run what matters is death. The doctor and the patient will both cease to be. Neither reason nor emotion can alter "the order of the world". Leaving all 'schools' and 'isms' apart, knowing that there was no question of any 'influence' either way, we cannot but watch with a silent wonder the breathtaking appearance of an 'absurd' protagonist in Bengali literature. Shashi and Rieux speak the same language.

Shashi remembers how Kumud, his friend, philosopher and

uide in the world of thought, had lectured him once "to demonstrate the foolishness of people everywhere" How can we not notice the word "foolishness" which being a denial of reason, is only one step from the 'absurd'? "Shashi reflected. In the world of thought we really do not recognize differences of levels, and lump together matter, and the reality of matter's existence. Do we ever consider the fact that there is no relationship between man and man's existence? When a man laughs or cries we identify him with his emotion—and mentally pin a label on him—happy or unhappy. Such labelling is not entirely wrong: . . . for it is convenient to use a few distinctive words to indicate who laughs and who weeps. Why move beyond that limit of detached observation and ask for a change? Why try to wipe away silent tears and replace them with loud jubilation?"<sup>22</sup>

Here we recall *The Plague*, Part V, Chapter 4, where the streets of Oran are overflowing with wildly jubilant crowds of survivors. they are singing and dancing down the streets, but the silent ones, those who are left to live with their memories alone, are also remembered by Camus ("But who gave a thought to these lonely mourners? . . . In the streets and squares people were dancing"<sup>23</sup>) and the immense insignificance of human emotions is clearly brought out.

To return to Shashi: "What good purpose would it serve to have only health, forgetfulness, happiness, joy and festivity instead of disease, suffering, sorrows, and pain? There was something still more curious. If it did not do any good, what harm did it do, anyway?"<sup>24</sup> Shashi is questioning the whole value system that rules the philistine world: a question not unfamiliar to Camus' readers.

We have already noticed that both the novels start with death as a *fait accompli*. In order to prove the worthlessness of the doctor's profession, and of human will, both Camus and Manik Bandyopadhyay selected another parallel situation in their novels. Nothing could be more effective as a symbol of the inadequacy of divine justice, or the meaninglessness of the 'order' of the universe than the death of a child. In both the novels we are faced with a cruel case of child-death where the child dies in spite of a stupendous fight put up by the desperate doctor. Clearly, no explanation is possible for this waste of innocent life except that there is no 'reason' in the matter of existence. We are all victims of a playful God who kills us for

his sport. In *The Plague* M. Othon's son dies, with Rieux, Tarrou and Father Paneloux moving heaven and earth to save the child. In *The Puppets' Tale* Basudeb Banerji's son dies by falling off a tree. All Shashi's human efforts and the Banerji family's tears and prayers fail to change his fated hour. It is no doubt interesting to note that both Camus and Manik Bandyopadhyay chose the same image to demonstrate the irrationality of the world order, the purely whimsical nature of an irresponsible creator, and the pointlessness of human efforts, be it through faith or be it through reason. Father Paneloux's prayers and Rieux's sermons prove to be equally ineffective.

In *The Plague* the significance of the doctor coming in contact with a dead rat is obvious from the beginning, as the plague captures the city of Oran. In *The Puppets' Tale* the full significance of the doctor carrying a corpse gradually unfolds in the course of the novel, as a long and ceaseless procession of death, spiritual and physical, passes before the helpless eyes of the doctor.

After a decade-long wait, Kusum's love for Shashi dies. By the time Shashi wakes up to the fact of love within himself, Kusum declares: "There was a Kusum once. She is no longer alive. She is dead."<sup>25</sup> Shashi can only blame himself for that: "Kusum had died—before his very eyes. He had let this happen."<sup>26</sup> Shashi had allowed the spiritual death of Kusum, the vivacious young woman who had managed to remain free from the tentacles of convention ("crazy Kusum"), uncontaminated by the permeating evil of Gaodia.

Another spiritual death that Shashi fails to prevent is that of his sister, Bindu. Shashi's efforts to rescue her from the humiliation of living with a husband who treats her like a whore ultimately fails. Not because of external circumstances but because like all other evils of Gaodia it was already inside Bindu herself. She had gone beyond Shashi's cure. Bindu had become a hopeless alcoholic, obsessed by the very life of unnatural excitements that Shashi was trying to save her from. Hence we find an exasperated Shashi serving his sister alcohol in the dead of the night (from his medicine cabinet, too, to complete the irony of the situation) and finally, returning her to her husband, accepting total defeat.

But spiritual deaths are not the only deaths that our illustrious doctor is forced to witness. How can anyone knowing



Bengali literature ever forget the death-scene of Jadab and his wife? Jadab was known to be a *siddha purush*, a holy man who has reached the advanced stages of spiritual powers. He had mastered *suryajñāna*, solar science, he said, and could foretell the future, including the date of his own death. This was a harmless boasting he chanced to make while trying to impress Shashi, the faithless rational creature; as luck would have it this casual remark took on the form of a forecast and the turn of circumstances led to an unthinkable tragedy. Jadab had decided to choose *icchanmityu*, voluntary death, like Bhishma of the *Mahabharata*, the rumour went. From the 'absurd' philosopher's point of view this is the ultimate, and the only freedom man has: to die according to his own free will and not submit himself to the whims of his maker. This is the only victory man can enjoy, to deny death its ultimate power by bringing it within the limits of choice and free will, and eliminating the element of uncertainty. But the terrible irony lies in the fact that Jadab's *icchanmityu* is very far from being willed by him, Jadab dies as a victim of social circumstances. As thousands of wildly ecstatic disciples pour into Gaodia crowding around the dying miracle-workers, chanting, weeping, worshipping hysterically, Shashi the doctor stands motionless, impotently watching the sure signs of opium-poisoning appearing on the faces of Jadab and his wife. Like Jadab, who had to die to save his face, Shashi becomes a captive of the situation and acts as an unwilling but choiceless accomplice in this cruel case of a double death. This double suicide is perhaps the harshest, most unscrupulous and inhuman suicide depicted in Bengali literature—the smile Jadab tosses at Shashi before closing his eyes forever, stays with the reader. Shashi the puppet stands and watches, serving, perhaps, the purpose of his ruthless creator. Another irony is that Jadab's wife, Pagal-didi, whose ordered household represented peace and affection for Shashi, accuses him of having started the fatal rumour. Thus, the doctor, instead of acting as an agent of life, inadvertently acts as an agent of death of the worst kind. If Jadab failed to fulfil the 'expectations' of his ardent admirers, life would have become worse than death for him in Gaodia.

In this procession of death Sen-didi is another face to remember. She is the beautiful, young wife of a doddering old country doctor, with an affectionate corner in her childless heart for

Shashi. She is infected with smallpox virus by her insanely jealous husband, but Shashi puts up a heroic struggle, and manages to snatch her away from the grips of death. But the price is too great. The person that emerges from the ashes is not only utterly ugly and partially sightless, but also graceless. Instead of being grateful to Shashi for her life she curses him for spoiling her beauty and her eye. The lovely and loving Sen-didi that Shashi had struggled to save, dies, and an ill-tempered, self-centred, ugly and loveless creature appears. But even this new Sen-di i does not survive. She dies, and in Shashi's hands too, while giving birth to her illegitimate son by Shashi's father. Tarrou told Rieux: "Your victories will never be lasting." The rocks that Rieux and Shashi carry uphill, roll down to the bottom. The doctor fights death. His mission is an impossible one.

In spite of their common notions about the aim and objective of human life, Rieux and Shashi reach two different ends. Shashi gives up his struggle in the end and becomes an automaton. But Rieux becomes 'engagé' and remains human. Rieux is a step forward from Shashi. We can find at least three reasons for this difference in their final attitude to life.

(a) Coming as a natural final product of the metaphysical tradition of Europe of his times, Camus had a long line of fore-runners who paved the way for Rieux. In this connection we can remember Henri Hell's review of *The Outsider* in *Fontaine* in July 1942. Without having read *The Myth of Sisyphus* which was published in December 1942, Henri Hell mentioned Kierkegaard, Malraux, Sartre etc. as being of the same philosophical category as the author of *The Outsider*.<sup>27</sup> Rieux is a definite progress forward from Camus' own previous position, he is an improvement upon Meursault. Camus makes this position clear in his notebooks.<sup>28</sup> Apart from all the philosophers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Jaspers there was a whole galaxy of novelists trying to develop the character of the absurd protagonist in Europe. Writers like Kafka, Barbusse, Malraux and Sartre were there to strengthen the position of Rieux. Camus was not alone. He stood on a firm foundation of an established tradition of unromantic revolt of the individual against the system. His alienated hero is not the first sign of, but the finished product of the spirit of his times. Whether it was a result of

the post-war trauma, or the logical by-product of the urban industrialization, or a result of the guilt produced by the Nazi nightmare of Europe, is not relevant for our present purpose. What matters is the fact that it is an expression of the tensions of modern existence. Having had the advantage of a firm metaphysical and literary tradition as his background, Rieux comes to us as a mature outsider who has learnt how to exist in the face of the basic irrationality of the order of the world.

But Shashi comes to us as a pioneer. He is the first of his kind. He has neither precedents nor contemporaries. Manik Bandyopadhyay did not have the advantages of Camus, yet the philosophy of life he chalks out for his protagonist is a clear parallel to the 'absurd' philosophy in its early stages. Shashi breaks away from the tradition of vagabond outsiders of Bengali literature. They were romantically alienated individuals, either in the Keatsian fashion or, more rarely, in the wild Byronic style, roaming the streets of Calcutta and Dacca; sometimes we find them in the morning mist of London, or along the spring-splashed avenues of Paris as well. Apart from these rootless offsprings of Eurasian culture there were one or two truly indigenous natural outsiders like Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's Sreekantha or Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Apu, but they too were incorrigible romantics, the archetypal vagabond who is born without any ties. There is no conscious revolt.

Shashi stands alone, friendless and tiny, facing a vast world of unreason, trying to combat it fruitlessly with reason. He is a scientist, a realist, who accepts social responsibility voluntarily, and failing repeatedly in his mission ultimately gives up and withdraws from the system altogether. He is the first rebel, but his lonely stand makes him weak while Rieux is surrounded by companions and this lends him strength. He has Tarrou, Rambert, Grand and Father Paneloux beside him, comrades-in-arms, sharing his basic ideal in their own different ways. They represent the voices that surrounded Camus; the ideas were in the air. But Manik Bandyopadhyay was surrounded by noises of a totally different language. He had nothing to borrow from them, and no one to share his ideas with. Shashi, therefore, has no communication with anyone and no one helps him in his cause. Shashi is an early Rieux, he is what Rieux would probably have been if he were to be born in India in the early thirties. Shashi lacks the intellectual companionship that sup-

ports ieux throughout the plague. Tarrou is the counterpart of Rieux. He is the learner, Rieux is the worker. Tarrou's business is to know, to understand; his code of morals is "to comprehend" without sitting on judgment. His is a passive approach, while Rieux's is the active one. Rieux works without cherishing any hope of success, because to him it is the effort that matters. Tarrou and Rieux are in a sense complementary to each other, together they make a saint who both understands and acts,—saves, and sacrifices himself. These two figures readily bring to the Indian mind *Gita's* conceptions of the *jñānayogi* and the *karmayogi*, those who make the utmost effort either through knowledge or through actions but without the expectation of a result. In his *vishvarupa darshana* Arjuna learns about the utter insignificance of the human individual against the great scheme of things governed by Time, in the form of death. But Shashi is no Arjuna, he has no Krishna to guide him, nor is he Rieux. His discovery and its impact crushes him. Alone, frustrated, robbed of his hopes and illusions, he refuses to climb the hill ever again to watch his favourite sunset.

(b) The second reason is that God plays an important role in Rieux's metaphysical system. Having set himself up as a corrector of God's creation, Rieux has a firm ground under his feet. He is to do what God's church has failed to do, i.e., bring God's grace to the damned.<sup>29</sup> He is out to create God by becoming God.<sup>30</sup> (One wonders whether, like Ravana, he is trying to justify God's creation of man by becoming God's enemy!) Awareness of his chosen task as a dedicated rival to an irresponsible God, gives him energy and courage in the face of hopelessness. He has conviction, he is not tired of raging a battle that he is bound to lose.)

But Shashi's metaphysics excludes God. He never gives Him a thought. We find Shashi awed by the vast mystery of the universe without ever wondering about its creator. He is aware of the irrationality of the outside world in relation to man's rational demands which is Camus' basic concept of the 'absurd'.<sup>31</sup> While Shashi expects a rationally ordered cosmos, he is hurled instead into a chaos impervious to reason. This realization drains him of all hope and human energy, Shashi becomes a mere automaton. Separated from his soul, devoid of all his dreams and desires, he lives on as a mechanical worker totally alienated from

his surroundings,  
cable outsider.

s—an irrevocable outsider.

As long as God and God's imperfect creation will be there, there will remain a need for its corrector: Rieux, therefore, remains useful to himself. But Shashi cannot find a similar position for himself in his own metaphysical framework, therefore becomes useless in his own eyes and his sadness engulfs all else.

(c) A detached observer by nature, Shashi watches his defeats and hardens up inside, moving further and further away from himself. "The Outsider is not a freak, but is only more sensitive than" the ordinary human animal. "He sees too deep and too much."<sup>33</sup> But "the Outsider's chief desire is to cease to be an outsider"<sup>34</sup> not by joining the herd which means slipping back into the rejected order, but by moving forward. Meursault moves forward and becomes Rieux, but Shashi collapses and becomes a dead man. Shashi, unlike Rieux, is homeless and rootless. He is motherless, and Gopal, his father, is the principal barrier in Shashi's life,—whereas Rieux's mother Mme. Rieux is a silent source of strength and human warmth to Rieux. He has been married, has known what it is to share one's life with another person, and has also known separation. Because he has known union, separation is meaningful to him. Shashi has never known union, he has never really known women and therefore Kusum's departure even before he properly realized what love was, leaves him in a strange state of mind. The idea of separation does not take a positive shape in his mind the way it does with Rieux. Without a God, without a home, without associates, without a woman, and without an established metaphysical or a literary tradition behind him, Shashi stands alone—an island in a loveless world. "To live only with what one knows, and what one remembers, cut off from what one hopes for, . . . he realized the bleak sterility of a life without illusions. There can be no peace without hope."<sup>35</sup> These are Rieux's thoughts after Tarrou's death. These are Shashi's thoughts too, after Kusum leaves forever. "Some events act as keys. . . . What was Shashi likely to find desirable?"<sup>36</sup> He has no choice but "continuing to watch his life ebb away in the village . . . he could not step out."<sup>37</sup> Shashi has to accept the inevitable fate of being imprisoned in Gaodia forever.

Shashi's main pride and consolation was that he had a choice

to reject Gaodia and launch out into the outside world whenever he wished. But his father sabotages his attempt to escape and tricks him into a lifelong exile in Gaodia village. The result is that Shashi, "the man who was so keenly sensitive to life, lay asleep in his room like a lifeless doll."<sup>10</sup> The last words addressed to Shashi by his father are: "No one can change what is fated. Rieux's old asthma patient who claims he knows how to live, and survives the plague. 's after the plague is over: "But what does that mean—plague? Just life, no more than that."<sup>11</sup> When human beings become "lifeless dolls" dancing on strings pulled by chance, life takes on the quality of an inescapable pestilence.

Rieux knows this all along, and is also aware of his human limitations. When Father Paneloux says: "You, too, are working for man's salvation." Rieux objects: "Salvation is too big a for me. I don't aim so high. I am concerned with man's life."<sup>12</sup> This is why he survives the plague.

Shashi is a beginner, he has no clear idea about what to expect from himself in spite of his philosophical awareness about the irrational nature of human existence. Starting with a scientific attitude (Manik Bandyopadhyay always liked to refer to himself as a rough and ready man of science) and discovering an unscientific universe, his shock is greater. Not having a root, he easily falls a victim to the overwhelming power of decay in Gaodia, Gaodia turns him into a puppet.

Colin Wilson, talking of some real-life outsiders like Nijinsky, T. E. Laurence and Van Gogh, remarks: "These men did not understand themselves, and consequently wasted their powers. If they had known themselves... their lives need not have been tragic. The Outsider's first business is self-knowledge."<sup>13</sup> Rieux knows his business, and therefore his is not a tragic tale. He is in possession of that priceless weapon, self-knowledge, and manages to retain his human existence. But Shashi lacks it, and the lack turns him into a pillar of salt.

<sup>4</sup> *Selected Essays and Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Philip Thody (London, 1970), p. 225.

<sup>5</sup> *Robinson Crusoe*, preface to the third volume.

<sup>6</sup> See *Notebooks*, p. 227: "Impersonal style throughout. . . nately be an account, a chronicle."

<sup>7</sup> Germaine Brée, "Albert Camus and *The Plague*",  
n. 8, p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> *Camus* (New York, 1964), p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> *Putulnacher Itikatha*, p. 1 (trans. Sen). The only available English translation is *The Puppets' Tale*, by Sachindralal Ghosh, ed. by Artur Isenberg (New Delhi, 1968). Unfortunately the translation leaves ample scope for improvement. In order to keep the translation as close to the original as possible, I have taken the liberty of using my own translation at places where the translated version is clearly inadequate. But generally the page reference here will be to the Ghosh translation.

<sup>10</sup> *Putulnacher Itikatha*, p. 78: see *The Puppets' Tale*, p. 79.

<sup>11</sup> *The Puppets' Tale*, p. 80.

<sup>12</sup> *Katha*, I.iii.14.

<sup>13</sup> *Putulnacher Itikatha*,

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> From Camus'

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>17</sup> *The Puppets' Tale*, p. 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gil

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *The Puppets' Tale*, p. 82.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>23</sup> P. 241.

<sup>24</sup> *The Puppets' Tale*, p. 82.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>27</sup> Pp. 353-355; see *Notebooks*, p. 305.

<sup>28</sup> P. 220.

<sup>29</sup> See *Notebooks*, p. 232.

<sup>30</sup> See above, p. 272.

<sup>31</sup> See *The Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 24, 38-39; J. Cruickshank quotes Jean-Paul Sartre (from *Paru*, 1945) on this in his book *Albert Camus* (New York, 1960), p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> Colin Wilson, *The Outsider* (London, 1956), p. 107.





Jean-Baptiste Clamence of Camus' récit *The Fall* (*La Chute*), its sole voice and protagonist, introduces himself as a "juge-pénitent." This curious paradox conceals an ambiguity which characterizes the mid-century Western man's sense of guilt. I would like to relate this ambiguity to the ambiguity of guilt we discern in Kafka's *The Trial* (*Der Prozess*). And I would like to suggest that between the two of them Kafka and Camus have depicted a fairly comprehensive view of the Western man's moral landscape in our century. I am not going to raise the question of influence, because that does not seem very relevant to me—whether in writing *The Fall* Camus was particularly inspired by *The Trial* or was consciously imitating it, is a matter beside the point. For there would probably have been no Camus without a Kafka as his predecessor, as there would probably have been no Kafka without a Dostoevsky as his predecessor. Also, my primary concern here is not to assess, on the basis of these two representative novels, the relative achievement of Kafka and Camus, but to see how an essential human experience is mirrored in them. This is purely a thematic comparison, if you permit me to use this nearly worn-out label of comparative literary criticism.

## I

A "juge-pénitent" must be a penitent and a judge at the same time. But can that be possible? A penitent can judge at the most his own sin but not others', for which he can only have compassion. But there can be false penitents dressed up as penitents: they will confess their sin to you with such a show of penitence that you will be inspired to confess yours to them, and then they will judge you. Such a sham penitent is Jean-Baptiste Clamence. In this récit he sets a trap—he is out to get the reader, the Everyman you, and he is quite sure by the end that

he has disarmed most of his defence. But why this dirty game? Jean-Baptiste's story is simple: He was a lawyer in Paris, a very successful lawyer, handsome, eloquent and charming, and with a sharp understanding of human psychology—in other words, always out to catch others at their weaknesses. This success was repeated in his social life—a bachelor he had had many women: a pleasant philanderer and eventually a debauch—a Svidrigaylov à la Paris—inus of course his sudden surge of love. And behind all this was boredom, and more, the ego, his excessive love for himself. Such was he—lawyer, lover, super-bourgeois with an apparent distaste for bourgeois pleasures, until one day he “feli”. He witnessed a suicide—a girl threw herself into the Seine, he heard the splash but did not rush to her rescue (Camus has a very effective pun I think, on the “fall” mixing the theological and the earthly with such simple ease). And then, some time after that, it began—the conscience, he suddenly heard a laugh one day, all alone on the Pont des Arts. The laugh began to plague him, in the midst of an argument or a social evening or during a love-making it would all on a sudden come, very much like that pain of Ivan Ilych's in Tolstoy's *novella* (*The Death of Ivan Ilych*). Eventually he left Paris and is now settled in Amsterdam where he frequents the sailors' digs practising his self-appointed vocation of judgment-penitence.

All this, of course, is from Jean-Baptiste's own récit which is quite probably untrue, just a trap to catch another sinner so that he can judge him. But it may also be that the story in the main is true, what is untrue is the tone of penitence and self-deprecation. His Amsterdam with its canals and its dead sea and its doves ever hanging in the air and its cosmopolitan multitudes, is quite clearly an analogue of hell. He might remind us of the Minos of Virgil's Tartarus and Dante's hell, Minos the judge, sending the arriving sinners to their appointed circles. But he is also a damned John the Baptist using hell water for his black baptism, and damned clemency as well—a false prophet and a false Pope. This twofold association, placing him before and after Christ and thus symbolizing through him the time continuum, is purely parodistic: there is no Christ and there is no redemption here, only eternal damnation. And in spite of his beautiful rhetoric to defend his dual profession and his Janus face, he sounds a bit exhausted at the end of the récit, almost pathetic. The last whisper takes on

a note of desperation as though if the reader Everyman does not respond to his temptation, he will be lost. But style finally wins. And if anything, this ex-lawyer "juge-pénitent" has style. And "style," he said at the beginning, "like sheer silk, too often hides eczéma" ("Le style, comme la popeline, dissimule trop souvent de l'eczéma").

Style is a product of the ego and it is the ego that Jean-Baptiste is primarily guilty of. But he turns this guilt into a commodity, a beautiful bait to hook others. That also is a guilt. And it is this ambiguity that the phrase "juge-pénitent" contains. If he had been truly penitent, he would not have judged others. But by affecting penitence he judges others, which restores is ego. In other words, the original guilt continues. And that is what the term "fall" means, eternal loss of innocence. On the other hand, if the two components of this paradox are released, we will have the judge and the penitent separately. That is the case in Kafka's *The Trial*. The ambiguity there is due to the continuous shift of focus from one to the other.

The ambiguity is hinted in the very first sentence of the novel: "Jemand musste Joseph K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne dass er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet" ("Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning"). Consider: The sentence has three components of which the last one reports the event: "wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet". The other two are of equal weight and are structured semantically on either side of the principal component. In the first ("Jemand musste Joseph K. verleumdet haben") the verb is certain although the subject is uncertain, and the verb involves guilt. In the second the subject is certain, and so also is the verb. In the course of the novel the uncertainty of the subject in the first is going to be removed, and the certainty of the verb in the second is going to be most definitely questioned.

This latter is often identified as the main theme of the novel. Seen in the light of Kafka's own sense of guilt which persisted throughout his life, this might seem so. Some of his other works also might bear this out, *The Metamorphosis* (*Die Verwandlung*) for example, or that strange story "The Judgment" ("Das Urteil"). Indeed the novel on the whole does leave an impression of awakening and if the details are considered, quite a number of them point to a growing awareness of guilt. It may

be that the guilt was lying submerged in the unconscious, the sudden arrest brings it up to the surface. But there seems to be a problem here: is it all that easy to specify this guilt? At least it is more difficult here than in *The Metamorphosis* or certainly in "The Judgment". Maybe if Kafka had written all his intended chapters, especially the one he planned on K.'s journey to his mother, it would have been more tangible. Perhaps this guilt should be taken a little generally here, reflected in his overly bourgeois concern for his profession and for appearances. His initial indifference to his "trial", speaking relatively of course, also may be said to reflect it. Maybe he is "the man from the country" in the Hebrew sense of *Am-ha'aretz*, as Heinz Politzer has suggested in his book on Kafka—*Am-ha'aretz* or unversed in the scriptures as well as ignorant of social conventions, or the Yiddish *Amhoretz*, *ignoramus*.<sup>1</sup> In other words, his narrower view of life is K.'s guilt. But this guilt alone does not account for the harrowing events of *The Trial* for which we must also turn to that initial "jemand"

That "jemand" turns out to be the Law, or rather the court, for the Law as such is not revealed to K., as it was not to "the man from the country" either. It is the court, in other words, that arrests him, interrogates and examines him, and then executes him. For what? The court does not give him any reasons, or the reasons given are too trifling to count. The whole experience is nightmarish, even when we consider his possible sense of guilt, for there does not seem to be any causal connection between his guilt and this experience. It is quite likely that his guilt is an outcome of his trial itself—not a rationalization exactly, but a result of probable soul-searching. Georg Bendemann's father is a little like a biblical patriarch, he spells out to him his guilt before pronouncing the sentence. But K.'s court is very much like a modern secret police organization which only picks up victims. All trials are ultimately mock trials, absolutely arbitrary, and all executions murders. If the Law had been manifest, as in "The Judgment", the brutality would not have been so meaningless. Oedipus also was up against a mystery, but that mystery made overtures to him through oracles, however baffling they might have been. And Oedipus ended in tragedy, with a recognition of the mystery, whereas K. ended "like a dog" ("wie ein Hund"), without even the

pathos of a melodrama. It is subhuman—and the “shame” K. feels during his execution is because of this subhumanity—absurd in a most terrifying sense.

Now if the court itself had been a mystery, then K. would have at least deserved some tragic dignity. But the court is human and is liable to guilt. As a matter of fact, it is quite a guilty court, thus turning its judgment absolutely impure. But it is powerful. Power radiating in concentric circles—even the outermost circle of women has some influence, corrupt no doubt but influence all right. And it is this power, the human power handed over from door to door of the house of Law, that the doorkeeper of the parable shows off. And so does the “Geistliche” (this adjectival noun is certainly ironical), an analogue of the doorkeeper whom he defends. It is interesting that the court has such a close association with the church which also sits on judgment on man—it seems to be a part of the same organization. One of the impressions that K. records repeatedly of his experience with the court is that it is an organization. Strange impression to have of a lawcourt, of judges and examining magistrates and clerks and advocates!

A corrupt but powerful organization, which picks him up arbitrarily and for no guilt of his though he has some, and which judges him in the name of the Law with which it has probably no connection, is Joseph K.'s antagonist. (In the parable of the man from the country his antagonist is not the Law, but the doorkeeper.) And it is their agon that the novel depicts in detail. The antagonist begins it, sending one after another its agents, to the growing bafflement of the protagonist and his growing sense of guilt, until the very last, the executioners with their deadpan faces. It is a little simplistic to my mind to think of the novel merely as the protagonist's search for freedom ignoring the antagonist's tightening grip on its prey. This is what I meant by the ambiguity of guilt in *The Trial*. There is here the “penitent” and there is also the “judge”, both involved with guilt—the “judge” himself is not the “penitent” here as in Camus' *The Fall*. It should be noted in this connection that while Camus' novel is a récit featuring only one person, a single speaking voice, Kafka's is a dramatic narrative where the protagonist is almost always confronted with others. The “you” of Camus' protagonist, the “monsieur” who gradually changes into “mon cher compatriote”, “mon cher”,

"cher" and finally: "Are we not all alike, constantly talking and to no one, for ever up against the same questions although we know the answers in advance" ("Ne sommes-nous pas tous semblables, parlant sans trêve et à personne, confrontés toujours aux mêmes questions bien que nous connaissions d'avance les réponses")?—that "you" is really "I" This is perfectly in keeping with Camus' meaning: the "juge-pénitent's" judgment-penitence is some sort of a spiritual masturbation.

A word that has become almost a part of our everyday vocabulary today is the word 'Kafkaesque'. It connotes an experience of nightmare and utter bafflement in the presence of a vast dehumanizing agency. Probably the greatest such experience the Western man has had in the recent decades is Nazi Germany. I am not speaking of Auschwitzes and Dachaus alone—those concentration camps set up by Hitler and his henchmen to exterminate the inferior race, but also of the plight of the individual gentiles who did not so readily accept the Führer's programme. A tap one morning on your door and your destiny is sealed. And it is not an accident, on the contrary your freedom might have been accidental. There are dossiers. The SS headquarters know who you are, whether the 'right' or the 'wrong' sort, and however insignificant you might have felt you are, they come. You think there must have been some mistake, but no, they do not allow themselves mistakes. They might not put you down straightaway on the condemned list, might even give you a chance of 'hearing', but it will eventually come to the same. At every stage they will strip you of your humanity until you become a "dog" and then they will plunge the dagger into your breast.

It is extreme naivety to think that the Nazis were a human aberration and this Kafkaesque experience was an accident. Even the most cursory glance at history will show us that this is true of all times and all nations as long as there is an accumulation of power somewhere in society, as long as there is, to use a contemporary jargon, an 'establishment'. What the Nazis did was perfecting the method, bringing it almost to its logical end. But the Yahya Khans and President Amins of today are no different from Hitler or Stalin, only less efficient maybe or more crudely brutal. In other words, one does not have to take

Kafka's *The Trial* merely as a prophecy of Nazi Germany, although one should not perhaps totally ignore this specific prophetic inspiration, but as the epiphany of a perennial truth. And this is a truth primarily about man's predicament in society, about how the individual becomes a victim of the establishment. The individual also has his guilt, the guilt of hyper-individuality—of a kind of narcissism, but the guilt of the establishment is of inhuman proportions.

I am not denying Kafka any metaphysical perception, all I am trying is to place it in the more immediate human context. That is, instead of looking at Joseph K.'s search for the Law as purely a search for God, I am trying to relate it to his experience with the court, the supposed custodian of the Law. Pure metaphysics is a matter of the soul alone, bare of all accoutrements and associations, but Kafka also deals with the purely human experience, and it is these two together, held in a knot of ambiguity, that make up his novel. Besides, I think that our experience (in this case the Western man's experience in particular) in history is not irrelevant to our approach to literature. Although, as readers we have been exhorted a number of times to free our minds of any previous impressions from life, it is impossible to become an absolute *tabula rasa*. And why should we? Is not literature meaningful to us because it illuminates our own experience? *The Trial* became particularly popular after the Second World War—does not the experience of that time explain why it did so?

This is no critique of the metaphysical approach to the absurd. But I do not feel impelled to take it as the sole approach. For there can be absurd on the purely human level also—as a matter of fact that is quite often the starting point of the metaphysical absurd—and I do not think Joseph K.'s court is no more than a mere symbol. It is as real as K. himself and there is no reason why we should straightaway put it in a metaphysical strait jacket. On the contrary we should recognize its reality and see in what way it affects K.'s life and finally, enhances the modern Western man's metaphysical angst.

If, on the social level, Kafka's novel depicts the human absurd, Camus' novel shows how social guilt becomes an abominable and pathetic luxury. *The Fall* came out in 1956, the time by which Europe had almost fully recovered from the Second World War—West Germany even had an "economic miracle"—

and there were signs of new prosperity all around, the time when the surviving murderers of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps were being brought to trial. Europe's conscience was stirred, for it recognized that it had let the massacres happen becoming thus an accomplice. The guilt was taking the form of a racial guilt, more than that, a guilt of all humanity. Soon Rolf Hochhuth would write his powerful play on the Pope's refusal to protest and Peter Weiss his "oratorio" on the Auschwitz hearings of Frankfurt taking his material from actual court proceedings. In other words, it was the time when guilt was becoming one of the primary preoccupations of Europe. Camus has taken Amsterdam as his locale, one of the northern tips of the European continent watching over it, as his protagonist reminds us again and again. That this locale should be symbolized as hell is also significant, for all Europe had taken a career of damnation.

Who can redeem humanity from this guilt? Christ again? But there is probably no Christ. All we have are false prophets and false Popes. Jean-Baptiste's récit is symbolic of how Europe has been wallowing in "penitence" ever since the guilt was recognized. But to "confess" and "confess" and "confess" is no true penitence: it is just talk, especially when we recall that civilized Europe was still committing murders in barbarous Africa. Just talk—that is, a pure intellectual exercise. It is a defence mechanism, to fight the enormity of the guilt all that is used is an elaborate admission of guilt, to judge one another for murder. But the crime continues: there are other Auschwitzes and other Dachaus; one Hiroshima is not enough, there are other and more frightful Hiroshimas preparing. Jean-Baptiste knows that if the girl gives him another chance, he will again fail, for "the water is so cold" ("l'eau est si froide"). Vietnam has proved it, and even if we feel "penitent" for Vietnam, we will not change, we will create other Vietnams. In the light of this, in the light of actual history, all our talk of guilt proves absolutely futile and fanciful. Hell is here and now.

*The Trial* ends on despair and the experience communicated in *The Fall* is that of damnation, I started out by saying that together, Kafka and Camus give us a more or less comprehensive view of the Western man's predicament in this century. Now, Kafka's despair is a loss of hope, the outcome of the drama between the penitent and the judge. Damnation, on the other



hand, is a stasis, it is something already arrived at. That is, Camus comes at the end of the journey begun by Kafka. Kafka began in hope, but that hope was frustrated—the parable of the man from the country symbolizes this perfectly: the man comes with the hope that he will enter the Law, but he is turned back at the door. He waits in the hope that some day he will be allowed in. But even though he waits a whole life time, his hope turns into despair. Kafka's is a straight narrative moving along with time. Camus uses flashback but, in spite of the semblance of movement from one part of the monologue to another—that is, from one day of confession to another—his novel does not move in spirit from the original point, which is the point of damnation stretched to eternity.

I think it is Arthur Koestler who has recently expressed the fear that probably the time has come for the extinction of the species itself. We may not take the fear literally, but the truth underlying it is worth considering. The 20th century has already shown us such horror that if the holocaust really comes now, we should not be surprised. Two World Wars, genocide after genocide after genocide, all our dreams of social change betrayed, the Bomb hanging in the air in a very delicate balance—in the background of all this Kafka's despair and Camus' damnation seem to be the most fitting commentary in the medium of the written word.

<sup>1</sup> Franz Kafka: *Parable and Paradox* (Ithaca, 1966), p. 174.

‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’, ‘কুমারসম্ভব’ এবং ‘কাদম্বরী’

“...অন্দরী যুবতী যদি অতীব কণ্ঠে যে তার যৌবনের মায়া দিয়ে প্রেমিকের হৃদয় ভুলিয়েছে তা হলে সে তার হৃদয়কেই আপন মৌল্যগোব মুখা অংশে ভাগ বন্টনের অভিযোগে সতিন বলে বিচার দিতে পারে। এ যে তার বাইরের জিনিস, এ যেন অতুল্য বসন্তের কাছ থেকে পাওয়া বর, ক্ষণিক মোহ-বিস্ময়ের দ্বারা জৈব উদ্বেগ সিদ্ধ করবার ক্ষমতা। যদি তার অস্তরের মধ্যে যথার্থ চারিত্রশক্তি থাকে তবে সেই মোহমুক্ত শক্তির দ্বান্ট তার প্রেমিকের পক্ষে যৎসং লাভ, দুগুন জীবনের জয়যাত্রার সহায়। সেই দ্বান্টে আত্মার স্থায়ী পবিত্রতা, এর পরিণামে স্থান্তি নেই, অবদান নেই, অভ্যাসের ধনিক্রমে উজ্জ্বলতার মালিক নেই। এই চারিত্রশক্তি জীবনের ধ্রুব মূল্য, নির্গম প্রসূতির আন্ত প্রয়োজনের প্রতি তার নিজস্ব নয়। অর্থাৎ, এর মূল্য মানবিক, এ নয় প্রাকৃতিক।” —এই ভাবটাকে নাট্য-আকারে প্রকাশ করতে গিয়ে ববীন্দ্রনাথের মনে পড়লো “মহাভারতের চিত্রাঙ্গদার কাহিনী। এই কাহিনীটি কিছু রূপান্তর নিয়ে অনেক দিন আমার মনের মধ্যে প্রচ্ছন্ন ছিল।”

কবি বলেছেন তাঁর ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ নাট্যকাহিনীর মূল উৎস মহাভারত। অন্তর্গত শ্রী প্রমথনাথ বিশ্বী তাঁর ‘ববীন্দ্র নাট্যগ্রন্থাবলী’ লিখেছেন: “বসন্ত চিত্রাঙ্গদা কাব্যের প্রকৃত মূল মহাভারতীয় উপাখ্যানে নয়, কালিদাসের শকুন্তলা কাব্যে।” আমার ধারণা ‘শকুন্তলা’র চাইতে ‘কুমারসম্ভব’-এর নিকট ঋণ ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ নাটকে অনেক বেশি। উপরন্তু কবি ‘কাদম্বরী’ কথা-কাব্যের সৌন্দর্যেরও পরিমিত পরিবেশন করেছেন ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’য়। এই প্রবন্ধে যথাস্থানে তার আলোচনা করে দেখাতে চাই।

ববীন্দ্রনাথ নিজে ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ প্রসঙ্গে ‘কুমারসম্ভব’-এর কোনো ইঙ্গিতই দেননি, শুধু মহাভারতীয় চিত্রাঙ্গদার রূপান্তরের কথাই উল্লেখ করেছেন। অথচ মহাভারতে চিত্রাঙ্গদার গল্প কবি-কাহিনীর তুলনার যৎসামান্য। আদিপর্বের ২১৪ অধ্যায়ে আছে :

মণিপূরেশবৎ রাজন ধর্মজং চিত্রবাহনম্।

তস্ত চিত্রাঙ্গদা নাম দুহিতা চাক্ষুশবর্ণা ॥ ১৪

তাং মদর্শ পুরে তমিন্ বিচরন্তীং যত্নস্বয়া ।  
দৃষ্টা চ তাং বহায়েহাং চকমে চৈত্রাবামীন্ ॥ ১৬  
অভিগমা চ বাহানং জাপয়ৎ স্বং প্রয়োজনম্ ।...

তদুবাচ্য রাজা স সাবর্ণূর্মহিঃ ৬৫ :  
রাজা প্রভরুনা নাম কুলেশ্বিন্ সন্তত্বৎ ৬ ॥ ১৭  
অপূতঃ প্রদবেনাথী তপস্তপে স উতম্ ।  
উগ্রো তপসা তেন দেবদেবঃ পিনাকমৃক্ ॥ ২০  
ঈশ্বরস্তাষিতঃ পার্থ দেবদেব উমাপতিঃ ।  
স তইশ্ব ভগবান্ প্রামাদৈককং প্রদবৎ কুলে ॥ ২১  
এককঃ প্রদবস্তাস্মাৎ ভবত্যাশ্বিন্ কুলে সদা ।  
তেষাং কৃমাতাঃ সর্বেষাং পূর্বেষাং মমজজিরে ॥ ২২  
একঃ চ মম কস্তেহং মে কুলস্ত্রোপাধিনী ত্বম্ ।  
পুত্রঃ মমহমিতি নে ভাবনা পুরুষবত ॥ ২৩

অর্জুন এই কল্যাক বিবাহ করতে পারেন এক শর্তে : তাদের পুত্র মণিপুত্র রাজ্যের বংশধর হবে—এই শপথ নিতে হবে পাণ্ডুনন্দনকে । মহাভারতের অর্জুন সেই শপথ গ্রহণ করে চিত্রাঙ্গদাকে বিবাহ করেন ।

এবীজনাথের চিত্রাঙ্গদা 'কুংসিত', কুরূপ', কিন্তু মহাভারতে সে 'চাকদর্শনা' । আদি উপাখ্যানে সে উপাচিকা হ'য়ে অর্জুনের প্রেমপ্রার্থিনী হয়নি, অর্জুনই তার দৌন্দর্যে মুগ্ধ হ'য়ে রাজা চিত্রবাহনের কাছে তার পানিপ্রার্থনা করেছিলেন । মহাভারতীয় চিত্রাঙ্গদার পুরুষাণি ভাব রবীজনাথের আখ্যানের অভীষ্ট প্রেমতত্ত্ব বিনিয়োগের সহায়ক হয়েছে এবং সেই কারণে 'চাকদর্শনা'ও রূপান্তরে হয়েছে 'কুরূপ, কুংসিত' । বিস্তারিত আখ্যানভাগকে রবীজনাথ এইভাবে সাজিয়েছেন : রাজ্যের সমুদয় দায়িত্ব পুত্রবৎ পালন করেন চিত্রাঙ্গদা । একদিন যুগযায় গিয়ে চৌরধারী এক মলিন পুরুষের সঙ্গে তার দেখা । অবজার হাসি হেসে সেই পুরুষ অরণ্যে অদৃশ্য হ'য়ে গেলো । চিত্রাঙ্গদার জীবনে এই প্রথম নারীষের উন্মেষ ঘটে । ঘরে ফিরে সে ভ্যাগ করলো তার ধর্ম্মপর, ভ্যাগ করলো পুরুষের বেশ । কুরূপা ব'লে অর্জুন প্রত্যখ্যান করেছিলেন তার প্রেমনিবেদন, অপমানিত করেছিলেন নারীর স্বাধীন মর্যাদাকে । এর পরে মদন ও বদস্তের বরে এক বছরের জঙ্গ মহন্তত্বলভ দিবা কান্তি, এবং বিকচ যৌবন লাভ করলো চিত্রাঙ্গদা । অরণ্যসমীপেই সরোবর ।

নবীন কান্তি লাভ ক'রে সে সর্বোত্তমের ধারে ব'সে জলে তার প্রতিবিম্ব  
 েত লাগলো। পা-ছুখানি জলে ডুবিয়ে তুরিয়ে ফিরিয়ে দেখলো রক্তিম আভা।  
 এই নারীকে আঁড়াল থেকে দেখে ভেসে গেলো অর্জুনের ঝঙ্কারের চাতুরী। নিজেই  
 এবার তিনি ধরা দিলেন চিত্রাঙ্গদার কাছে। অরণ্যের নিভৃত নিকেতনে সর্বোত্তম  
 তাঁরে গাঢ়জায়া শৈলগুহামুখে আতীর্থ পুষ্পশয্যাও আলো-আঁধারের লুকোচুরির মধ্যে  
 দিনের পর দিন চললো তাদের বভস শৃঙ্খার। অথচ চিত্রাঙ্গদার মনে স্থব্র নেই। তার  
 কেবলই মনে হয় তার লনিত রূপযৌবনই তাকে বঞ্চিত ক'রে অর্জুনের মোহাগ-চূষন,  
 নিবিড় প্রেমদৃষ্টি, থরথর আলিঙ্গন—সব হরণ করছে। ক্রমে অর্জুনের মনেও দেখা  
 দেয় 'প্রতিক্রিয়া' : কপের বন্ধনে হামিয়ে গুঁঠে তাঁর পৌরুষ ; চিত্রাঙ্গদাকে নিয়ে  
 যেরে ফিরতে চান অর্জুন, চান মুক্ত দাম্পত্য জীবনের স্বভাবসম্মত স্বচ্ছ আনন্দ।  
 মন-বশস্তের বরে প্রাপ্ত চিত্রাঙ্গদার বধভোগা যৌবনের অবসানে অর্জুন শাক্য  
 পেলেন প্রকৃত চিত্রাঙ্গদার, পেলেন পুরুষের যথার্থ মূর্ত্যিময়ী প্রেমিকাকে, আদম  
 মাহুতের সার্বক সহচরীকে।

এই আখ্যানে রবীন্দ্রনাথ 'দেহ' শব্দটিকে মচেতন ভাবে যথাসম্ভব এড়িয়ে  
 ার স্থানে ব্যবহার করেছেন 'কপ' শব্দটিকে। চিত্রাঙ্গদার সঃ  
 হে'র কথা বলে : তো আছে 'দেহের শোভা'র কথা;

রমণী তো  
 সহজেই অন্তরবাসিনী ; সজোপনে  
 থাকে আপনাতো ; সে তারে দেখিতে পায়  
 হৃদয়ের প্রতিবিম্ব দেহের শোভায়  
 প্রকাশ না পায় যদি।

যৌনকেতু,  
 কোন্ মহারাক্ষসীয়ে দ্বিচ্ছাধি বাণিয়া  
 অঙ্গসহচরী করি ছাচার মতন—

বলাবাহলা 'দেহ' দেহের 'অঙ্গসহচরী' হ'তে পারে না, হ'তে পারে দেহাশ্রয়ী রূপ !  
 অথচ চিত্রাঙ্গদার অঙ্গ যেন তার নিজের নয় :

কারে দেব করাইলে পান ! কার ভলা  
 মিটাইলে ! সে চূষন, সে প্রেম-সঙ্গম  
 এখানে উঠিছে কাঁপি যে অঙ্গ ব্যাপিয়া  
 বীণার কন্ডার সম, সে তো মোর নহে।

যেমন তাঁর অপানার নয়,  
তার কাছে মায়াবন :

সে চিরচুলভ মিলনের স্বপ্নস্বপ্তি  
সঞ্চে করে অবৈ পড়ে যাবে অতিদ্রুত  
পুষ্পদলসম, এ মায়া লাবণ্য মোর ;  
রসীকনাথ যাকে বলেছেন "এ যে তাঁর বাইরের জিনিস, এ যেন কতুবা  
কাছ থেকে পাওয়া যব... দেখা যাবে, 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'-তবের এক মেরুতে '  
মেরুতে 'আমি'

ভালে! যদি নাহি লাগে,  
স্বপ্নাতরে চলে যান যদি, বৃক কেটে  
মরি যদি আমি, তবু আমি—আমি যব ।

কে এই 'আমি' ? বিষ্ণু মহাশয় 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র বন্দ বাখ্যা করে বলেছেন :  
চিত্রাঙ্গদার বন্দ তাহার ধারকরা বাহিরের সৌন্দর্যের সঙ্গে ভিতরকার  
নিত্যসত্তার। তাহার ভাষায় 'অন্তরে বাহিরের মোর হচ্ছেই সত্য'।  
চিত্রাঙ্গদা কিছুতেই এ দুয়ের বনিবনাও করিয়া লইতে পারিতেছে না।  
অবশেষে এই বন্দ তাহার পক্ষে এমন মর্যাদিতক হইয়া উঠিল যে বাহিরের  
দৈহিক সৌন্দর্যকে বিদায় করিয়া দিয়া সে অন্তরের অমিত্যের মধ্যস্থ  
করিতে বাধ্য হইল।

এ-বাখ্যা সহজ ও স্বাভাবিক মনে হ'তে পারে, কিন্তু এর দ্বারা 'আমি' যে  
কে সেটা স্পষ্ট বোঝা সম্ভব হয় না। শেষ পর্যন্ত 'আমি'-র বাখ্যা করতে গিয়ে  
'অন্য'কে আনতে হ'লো :

ইহার রূপান্তরে ভাবান্তরে সান্ত ও অনন্তের বন্দ ছাড়া আর কিছুই নয়,  
কবি যাহাকে বলেন 'সীমার মধ্যেই অনীমের সহিত মিলন লাগনের  
পালা।' মাঝবের বেহ সন্যাস, তাহার আমি সীমাহীন ; আর এই দুইটি  
বিপরীত গুণসম্পন্ন বলিয়া নিরন্তর ইহাদের মধ্যে অস্বের আর অবলম্বন নাই।

অন্তপক্ষে উপেক্ষনাথ ভট্টাচার্য লিখছেন :

এই যে দেবসন্ত অপারিষ সৌন্দর্য বাহা চিত্রাঙ্গদার 'মহারাক্ষসী'  
'অঙ্গনহচরী' 'সপত্নী', তাহাতে চিত্রাঙ্গদার রূরূপ মেহটাকে অবলম্বন  
করিয়াই বিকশিত হইয়াছিল। দেহটা তো চিত্রাঙ্গদারই। হতবঃ  
অর্জুনের চরন, আলিঙ্গন, আদর গোহাগ, সে সব তো প্রকৃতপক্ষে

চিত্রাঙ্গদার দেহের সঙ্গেই জড়িত—তাঁহাওই দেহে অর্পিত। প্রথম মিলনে যে 'জীবন-স্বরণ'-বিশ্বরূপকারী 'অমর পুংক' তাহা তো চিত্রাঙ্গদারই। অথচ মিলনের বিচিত্র আনন্দাত্মকৃতি সে নিজে অহুতব করিয়া, পূর্ব আশ্বাসচেনন হইয়া, গভীর ও স্থল মননকিনতার দ্বারা দেহের মধ্যে রূপের একটা পৃথক অস্তিত্ব কল্পনা করিয়া, তাহার উদ্ভিষ্ট চূষন-আলিঙ্গন তাহাকে ঝাঁকি দিয়া সেই গ্রহণ করিতেছে, এইরূপ অহুতব কথা মনোবিজ্ঞানসম্মত ও স্বাভাবিক বলিয়া মনে হয় না। আসল কথা, একটা আইডিয়ায় বাহন হিসাবেই চিত্রাঙ্গদা চরিত্রকে বিচার করিতে হইবে

নিজের রূপ বিষয়ে চিত্রাঙ্গদা ব্যবেগ বলে, এটা আমি এটা আমার সন্তান। কলে দেহকে সে অস্বীকার করতে যেমন পারে না, তেমনিই স্বীকার করতেও তার অনিচ্ছা। অথচ রূপ তো নিতান্তই দেহনিষ্ঠ। দেহকে বাদ দিলে রূপ কোথায় আল্লর পাবে? দেহের সঙ্গে রূপের সংলগ্ন সম্বন্ধটা হ'লে রূপ ও দেহ—'অপৃথগ্‌যুগ্মনির্বর্তা'। রূপের আশ্রয়দেই দেহের আশ্রয়ন। রূপকে তুলে কেন উপায়ে দেহ থেকে পৃথক করা সম্ভব? অর্জুনের চূষন-আলিঙ্গনের লক্ষ্য কি তার রূপ, সে নিজে নয়? প্রেমিকের আল্লাব কি চিত্রাঙ্গদার দেহচেননার বাইরে? অন্তর্যক্ষে, রূপ যদি দেহবিরহিত হয়, তাহ'লে সেই রূপ আশ্রয়দানের আনন্দ চিত্রাঙ্গদা ভানলো কী উপায়ে? শূন্যপুংককে ভোক্তা কে? রূপ? না, চিত্রাঙ্গদা নিজে?—যেভাবেই দেখা যাক কেন, রূপকে দেহাত্মকৃতি থেকে পৃথক করা সম্ভব নয়। যতক্ষণ চিত্রাঙ্গদার অস্তিত্ব আছে ততক্ষণ তার দেহ আছে। আদিত্তে এক অন্তে সে দেহ রূপ। মধ্যবর্তী স্বরূপকে কবি হস্তে 'সংযোগ' সংস্কারে মধ্যে ধরতে চেয়েছেন। কিন্তু সেটা কি সম্ভব?

কালিদাসের 'কুমারসম্ভব' এবং 'শকুন্তলা'য় নিগূহীত রূপ অরূপপ্রেমে পৌছানোর উপায় মাত্র, স্বয়ং উপায় নয়। মনে হয় কালিদাসের প্রেরণাতেই রবীন্দ্রনাথ দেবতার দেওয়া রূপের ফাঁদ পাতলেন চিত্রাঙ্গদার জীবনে। এখানেও রূপ উপায় নয়, উপায় মাত্র। রূপের নাটকীয় সন্নিবেশে জটিলতা এসে পড়ায় 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র স্বরূপটাই সমতা হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে, তা না পারছে দেহের সঙ্গে মিলতে, না পারছে 'আমি'-র সঙ্গে আত্মীয়তা করতে। কালিদাসে রূপের নিগ্রহ, রবীন্দ্রনাথে অতিপ্রাকৃতের হাত ধ'রে রূপের অন্তর্ধান। এই অতিপ্রাকৃতের কল্পনায় 'কুমারসম্ভব'-এর সঙ্গে 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র মিল দেখা যাবে:

স্বরূপমাহার চ তাং কৃতশিত:

সমালগ্নে বৃথাষকেননঃ। ১

চিত্রাঙ্গদার 'আমি' স্পষ্টই তার 'জীবাঁদা' নয়। 'যে রমণী আপনায় শতস্তর  
তিমিরের

'আমি' সেই 'অশ্বরবাসিনী' রমণী, অশায়া ! রমণী,  
'বিত্তশক্তিতে' লভ রমণী। এব মধো অল্প কোনো তত্ত্ব খোঁজা বুঝা।

প্রবন্ধ কালিদাস বিখ্যে কবি যা বলেছিলেন, তাঁর নিছের বিখ্যেও সে

মনকে তিনি (কালিদাস) এমনি ভাবে ফলে ফলাইয়াছেন, মরোর নীমাকে  
এমনি করিয়া স্বর্গের সহিত মিশাইয়া দিরাছেন যে, মাঝে কোন  
বাহ্যগু চোখে পড়ে না।

পূর্বে বলেছি,

'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র সঙ্গ

মিল বেশি।

এ সেই অলোচনায় প্রবৃত্ত হওয়া যাক

প্রথম সাক্ষাৎ পেলো অর্জুনের

দৈর্ঘ্য বিধে, তঁরিন সে প্রথম সচেতন

দেখিলি'ম তাঁকে, যেন দু

অনন্ত বহুস্ত বহু পল্লব স্থগয়ে।

বড়েই ! হয়েছিল সে যৌবনোচ্ছ্বাসে

সমস্ত শরীর বহি দেবিতে দেবিতে

'অপূর্বপুলকভরে উঠে প্রস্থতিয়া

পশ্যার চরণশায়ী পথের মতন।

'কুমারসম্ভব'-এ শিবের সঙ্গে তাঁর চেগের মিলনে পাবতীও এইরকম :

বিকৃষী লৈলতাপি ভাবম্

অগ্নে: ক্ষুদ্রবালকদধকগ্নৈঃ। (৩ : ৬৬)

শিবের প্রত্যাখ্যানে পাবতীও বুকেছিলেন তাঁর অনিন্দ্য রূপ যৌবনের দৈর্ঘ্য। ঘরে  
ফিরে তিনিও হিতার দিখোচেনেন তাঁর কণকে

নিমিষ কণাঃ কপয়েন পাবতী। (৪ : ১)

কিন্তু প্রত্যাখ্যানে চেয়ে পড়েন না দেবী, বরং শিবকে পাত করার জন্য বেছে নিলেন  
তপস্কার কঠিন পথ। পাবতী এবং চিত্রাঙ্গদা, উভয়েইই সংকল্পসিদ্ধির উপায়

তপস্কা; কিন্তু পার্বতীর তপস্কার অদীম সঙ্কলন, চিত্রাঙ্গদার তপস্কা সে তুলনায় কম  
 পঠোপ, কারণ তাদের উদ্দেশ্য ভিন্ন। চিত্রাঙ্গদা পাত পড়ে চায় মূলত রূপ-যৌবন,  
 পার্বতী শেতে চান বন্ধা রূপের অবস্থাতা—‘ইথে মা কতু মনস্করূপতাম্’। (৫ : ২)  
 উভয়ের ইচ্ছা প্রেমের মুক্তি : পার্বতী দেহের নিগূঢ়ীত করে, চিত্রাঙ্গদা, আপাতত,  
 দেহের স্তম্ভ চাকতা অর্জন করে। পার্বতীর কাছে রূপযৌবন মিলে। চিত্রাঙ্গদার  
 কাছে আপাতত তাই তার মনঃ। তপস্কার পার্বতী পেলেন রূপাতীত প্রেম, চিত্রাঙ্গদা  
 স্তম্ভ। কিন্তু উভয়ের লক্ষ্য এক : প্রিয়তমকে ছাড় পড়া। ‘কুমারসম্ভব’-এ হরপার্বতীর  
 সাক্ষাৎস্থান শিবাসন হিমালয়প্রঃ; ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’তেও মিনাস্তান শিবালয়।

পার্বতীর প্রেমের গতি পূর্ণতর অর্জনে মনঃ—ইতি কাব্য

তার কাব্যনা : ‘সরূপহার্য’ প্রেম। এ প্রেমসাধনার পথ, সংসার ভাগ  
 করে নয়, সংসারের মধ্য দিয়েই, শাস্ত মঙ্গলের দি। চিত্রাঙ্গদার অভিশাপও  
 শেষ পর্যন্ত তাই : তারও প্রেমের গতি অর্পণ থেকে পূর্ণের দিকে, ‘হা হ’রে থাকে’-র  
 চাইতে ‘বা হওগা ভালো’-র দিকে, কালের থেকে কালের অর্জনে, ‘গৃহদীনতা’র  
 থেকে ‘দিব্যবস্ত্রের গৃহ’-র দিকে : উভয় প্রেমেরই এক পরিণতি কুমারসম্ভব।

চিত্রাঙ্গদার চরিত্রে শুধু যে পার্বতী চরিত্রেরই ছায়া পড়েছে আমরা  
 বিশ্বাস, চিত্রাঙ্গদা অর্ধেক পার্বতী, অর্ধেক মজাদেতা। নিচের আলোচনা থেকে তা  
 পরিষ্কার হবে। এবং সেজন্য প্রথমে আলোচ্য ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ নাট্য-কাব্যে মন ও বসন্তের  
 ঘোষ ভূমিকা।

### মন ও বসন্ত

সংস্কৃত নাটকের সূত্রধার-পরিপার্শ্বিকের মতোই মন ও বসন্ত চিত্রাঙ্গদার  
 জীবননাট্য পরিচালনা করছে। রবীন্দ্রনাট্যে এদের ষাণ্ডিক আবির্ভাব ‘কুমার-  
 সম্ভব’-কেই স্মরণ করিয়ে দেয়। ‘কুমারসম্ভব’-এও এদের আবির্ভাব বৈত এবং কাজ  
 একই। পার্শ্ব্য শুধু এই যে ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’-র এরা দেবতা হ’য়েও অধিকতর মানবিক।  
 ‘কুমারসম্ভব’-এ মন-বসন্তের সঙ্গে পার্বতীর কোনো সংলাপ নেই, আছে দেববাজের  
 সঙ্গে, তাও একাকী মননের। রবীন্দ্রনাট্যে চিত্রাঙ্গদাকে প্রতিপদে এদের পরামর্শ  
 নিতে হয়েছে। বসন্তের এখানে কাজ ‘অনন্ত যৌবন’ জাগানো, মননের কাজ  
 প্রেমের উদ্বোধন। ‘কুমারসম্ভব’-এ বসন্তের কাজ হিমালয়প্রঃ অকালবসন্তের  
 আবির্ভাব ঘটানো; মননের কাজ আরো দায়িত্বপূর্ণ ও বেদনাদায়ক : শিবের সঙ্গে  
 সাক্ষাৎ প্রহারের উদ্দেশ্যে কৃত্যবরণ। ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’-র বসন্তের কাজ প্রত্যক্ষ, মননের



পাশে, উপরন্তু তার অপমৃত্যুর ভীতি নেই। 'হুমারদস্তব'-এ বসন্ত নির্বাক; যেমন দেবসভায় ও হিমালয়গ্রন্থে, তেমনই প্রিয় হৃদয়ের ধূসর ভস্মরূপের পাশে—বসন্ত এক নির্বাক উপস্থিতি। 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র মদন-বসন্ত উভয়েই প্রগল্ভ। উপেক্ষিতা চিত্রাঙ্গদার রূপকে নবযৌবনে ও অনিন্দ্যকান্তিতে সজ্জিত ক'রে অর্জুনকে প্রলোভিত করতে হবে, অপরূপ কান্তিত্বরা এই নবযৌবনের বরদবিধাতা মদন ও বসন্ত।

'হুমারদস্তব'-এ রূপযৌবন সৃষ্টির বালাই নেই। সেখানে মদনের কাজ শিবের সঙ্গে সন্ধানত বাণের প্রয়োগ এবং জিতেদ্রিয় শিবকে পার্বতীর রূপযৌবনে মৃগ্য করা। মদনকে অবশ্য বাণক্ষেপ পৃথক অগ্রসর হ'তে হয়নি। পুষ্পধরর জ্যা আকর্ষণেই চকল 'য়ে উত্তেজে শিবের চিত্ত'। 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র বসন্তের কাজ চিত্রাঙ্গদার দেহে রূপযৌবন জাগিয়ে তোলা, 'হুমারদস্তব'-এ তার কাজ প্রকৃতিতে বসন্ত জাগানো। 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র বসন্তের দৃষ্টি দেহের প্রতি, 'হুমারদস্তব'-এ হিমালয়গ্রন্থে অরণ্য ও জীবের প্রতি। তবে উভয়ই 'আকালিকারী বাক্য মধুগ্রহুতিম্' (৩ : ৩৬)—অকালবসন্ত। উভয়ই মদন-বসন্তের কাজ নাটকীয়।

'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র অর্জুনের ত্রফচারী বেশ; প্রথম দর্শনে তিনি 'চীরধারী হলিন পুরুষ'। এই বেশের সঙ্গে 'হুমারদস্তব'-এ ছন্দরূপী শিবের ত্রফচারী বেশের খানিকটা মিল দেখা যায়। কিন্তু শিব হলেন রূপের অ-বস্ত মহাস্তিধর দেবতা; অর্জুন মহাবীর হ'য়েও প্রলোভনের বস্ত, হৃন্দরীর কান্তরূপে পদখলিত ইন্দ্রিয়বস্ত দুর্বল মানুষ। শিবের কোথেকে মদন তাই ভস্মীভূত, আর অর্জুনের জীবনে কাম জয়ী। বসন্ত-সমুদ্র মদন-সনাথ পার্বতীর তরুণ রূপ, নবীন যৌবন বার্থ হয়েছে শিবের সমুখে; চিত্রাঙ্গদার বরপ্রাপ্ত লোভন রূপ পতন ঘটিয়েছে ত্রফচারী অর্জুনের চরিত্রে। চিত্রাঙ্গদার রূপ যৌবন দেবদত্ত 'অকালিক'; পার্বতীর স্বাভাবিক, নিজস্ব; বয়ঃ তার দৈহিক নৌমর্ধ তপস্তার তাপে রূপান্তরিত মনের নৌমর্ধে।

মদন-বসন্তের বরে দেবদুর্লভ অনিন্দ্য রূপযৌবন লাভ ক'রে চিত্রাঙ্গদা, মনে হ'তে পারে, পার্বতীর সমতুল্য হলেন, কিন্তু যৌবন উপভোগের যোগ্য এই নবীন! চিত্রাঙ্গদার জন্ত অপেক্ষিত তাতে আর তাকে পার্বতীর সঙ্গে তুলনা করা অসুচিত হবে। রূপান্তরিতা চিত্রাঙ্গদার আদর্শ এখন 'কামধরী'র মহাশেতা।

স হা সে তা এবং চিত্রাঙ্গদা

'কামধরী'র পরিবেশ অজ্ঞোদ্য সুরোবহের উপাত্তে বিজ্ঞ বন; কৈলাসের শাখা চন্দ্রধর পর্বতের পাদদেশে। 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'তেও অর্জুন-চিত্রাঙ্গদার সংকেত স্থানটি খেঁচক

দূরে দেখা যায় পর্বত, যার উপরে নেমে আসে বৃষ্টিধারা। শৈলগুহা মুখে চিত্রাঙ্গদা শয্যা প্রস্তুত করে :

এনো নাথ, ওই দেখো  
গাঢ়জ্বালা শৈলগুহামুখে, বিছাইয়া  
রাখিয়াছি আমাদের মধ্যাহ্নশয়ন,  
কচি কচি গীতস্ত্রায় কিশলয় তুলি  
অর্পিত করি স্বরনারী ঐকরনিকরে ।

‘কাণ্ডহরী’তে অভিযান্ত্রিক মহাশেতার জল অপেক্ষমাণ পুণ্ডরীকের শিলাতলবর্তী পুষ্পশয্যাটি মনে পড়বে : ‘গর্ভধূলি-কষায়-পরিমল-মনোহারিণি চ কুমুদ-কুবলকয় কমলানি গৃহীষ্যাগত্য তন্নিব্বেত লতাগৃহ-শিলাতলে নয়নমস্ত্রাকল্পয়ম্ ।’ পুষ্পশয্যার শয়ান চিত্রাঙ্গদা :

দগ্ধপর্ণ শাখা হতে  
দৃঢ় মালতীর লতা আগন্ত-অবেশে  
মোর গৌরতঃ ‘পরে পাঠাইতেছিল  
নিঃশব্দ চুখন ; ফুলগুলি কেহ চুলে,  
কেহ পদতলে, কেহ স্তনতটমূলে  
বিছাইল আপনার মরণশয়ন ।

শয়ান পুণ্ডরীকের শরীরেও অমনি করে ছল :

মদন-বন্দীকরণচূর্ণনেব কুম্বমরেণুনা তকভিরাহন্যমানম্ আশ্বরাগমিব  
সংক্রাময়স্তিরাঙ্গমৈরনিল-চলিতৈঃ অপোহ-পল্লবৈঃ স্পৃষ্টমানং হরতাভিবেক-  
সলিলৈরিবাভিনব-পুষ্পস্তবকমধুশ্চৈবৈনবস্ত্রিয়াতিবিচ্যমানম্ অলিনিবহ-  
নিপীযমান-পরিমলৈকপরিপাতস্তিক্তশব্দকুটুমলৈঃপুষ্পবশল্যাটকরিব সধুমৈঃ  
কুম্বমরেষণ ভাভ্যমানম্ ।

চিত্রাঙ্গদার গৌর ত্বহতে স্ব’রে পড়ে ফুলের চুখন—কখনো চুলে, কখনো পদতলে, কখনো স্তনতটে। অভিযান্ত্রিক মহাশেতার গৌরতম্বর উপরে চক্ৰকিরণের সোলাল চুখন :

(অথ চক্ৰঃ) তথাহি প্রতিবিম্বজ্জলেন ষেৎসলিলকবিকাচিতং চুখতি কপোল-  
ভুগলং লাবণ্যবতি পরোধরভারে নিপততি প্রফুটিতকরঃ স্পৃশতি বসনাবলি-  
মনীনু নিমল-নখলয়মূর্তিঃ পাশয়ো পততি ।

জ্যোৎস্না পড়ছে অনিত না শযাশায়ী চিত্রাঙ্গদার চিকণ তরুতে :

পূর্বাচল হতে  
ধীরে ধীরে সরে এসে পশ্চিমে হেলিয়া  
বাদকীর শব্দী, সমস্ত হিয়াংস্তরাশি  
দিগাছে ঢালিয়া, অদিতবলন যোর  
অহানন্তন জ্বল শৌখণের 'পরে ।  
পুষ্পগন্ধে পূর্ণ তরুতল ; ঝিল্লিরবে  
তন্ত্রায় নিশীথিনী ; স্বচ্ছ সরোবরে  
অকণ্ঠিত উল্লসকরচ্ছায়া ; হুগু বাহু ;  
শিরে লয়ে জ্যোৎস্নালোকে মন্থ চিকণ  
রাশি রাশি অঙ্ককার পল্লবের তার  
সুস্তিত অটবী ।

'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র সরোবরের প্রয়োজন হয়েছে কতকটা পরিবেশ রচনার ভঙ্গ, কতকটা  
চিত্রাঙ্গদার ন্তন রূপসাবণের পৃথিব্যবের জন্ত । প্রয়োজন গৌণ হ'লেও এই  
সরোবর 'কাদম্বিনী'র অচ্ছাদ সরোবরেরই উজ্জ্বল অভিজ্ঞান ।

নিবিড় নির্জন বনে নির্যম সরসী—  
এমনি নিভৃত নিরাপন্ন, মনে হয়,  
নিস্তব্ধ মধ্যাহ্নে সেথা বনগন্ধীগণ  
আন ক'রে যায়, গভীর পুণিমাভায়ে  
সেই হুগু সরসীর অিচ্ছ শব্দ তটে  
শয়ন করেন হুগে নিঃশব্দ বিপ্রায়ে  
অাপিত-অকণে ।

অচ্ছাদসরসীর অন্ততম বিশিষ্ট অভিজ্ঞান বনগন্ধীগণের আন : 'অশক্তিবর্তীনাভিবস্ত-  
ক্রীড়া-রাগিনীতি: আনন্দময় বনগন্ধীগণ: কেন্দ্রাশয় হুগে: হুগিকৃতম্ ।' বিতীয়  
অভিজ্ঞান—'অনন্ত অকণ' :

উৎসাহ শব্দে  
একদা হুগুশব্দ, তাম্র, আঁপ, ও  
গিগেওঁওঁ হুগুওঁওঁ হুগুশব্দ  
মানসের জীবে । যেখানে হুগুওঁওঁ

সেই স্বপ্নসরসীর সলিলের পানে,  
অমনি পড়িল চোখে অনন্ত-অন্তল।

‘অপূর্ণ-পৰ্যন্তমপাণ্ডঃ স্পষ্টদৃষ্টকলত্রাত্ত্বতয়া রিত্তমিবোপলক্ষ্যমানম্’। এই শব্দোৎসব চিত্রাঙ্গদার নূতন রূপের সমীক্ষার ক্ষুদ্র। এই রূপ-সমীক্ষার ঘটটিাই যেন কারণে দেয় নূতন চিত্রাঙ্গদার সঙ্গে ‘কাদম্বরী’র মহাশ্বেতার মিলের কথা।

নূতন রূপ লাভ করে চিত্রাঙ্গদা ‘ঘনতরু অঙ্কুরার হতে’ ধীরে ধীরে এসে দাঁড়ালো শব্দোৎসব সোপানের শ্রেষ্ঠশালাপটে। ‘কী অশুর রূপে!’—তার রূপ বিষয়ে কবির ঐ একটি মাত্র উক্তি, ঠিক যেন কালিদাসের তর্জিটি। (সমগ্র ‘শকুন্তলা’-নাটকে কোথাও শকুন্তলার একশ বর্ণনা নেই, কিন্তু আশেপাশের নানা চিত্রের অভিঘাত থেকে পাঠকের মনে শকুন্তলার একটি বিশিষ্ট রূপ ফুটে ওঠে। এও ঠিক তাই।) চিত্রাঙ্গদার এমনই লাভবান যে তার অঙ্গে বসন আছে কিনা বোকা যায় না। শব্দোৎসবের স্বচ্ছ জলে নিজের মুখচ্ছায়া দেখে সে চমকে ওঠে। মুড় হেসে হেলিয়ে দেয় নিজের বামবার, এলিয়ে দেয় কেশপাশ। মুকুটের চরণে লুটিয়ে পড়ে। পা ভূমিরে ঘুরিয়ে ফিরিয়ে দেখে চরণের আভা। দেখে তার বিশ্বের অস্ত্র নেই, এই যেন প্রথম দেখছে নিজেকে।

তেমনি বসন তার

মিদান্তে চাহিতেছিল অঙ্গের লাবণ্যে

প্রথাবেশে।

যেমন মহাশ্বেতার প্রসঙ্গে আছে :

অতি ধবলপ্রভাপরিগতস্নেহতয়া দৃষ্টিকগৃহগতামিব  
দ্রুতশলিলমরামিব বিমলচীনাস্তকাস্তবিতামিব  
আদর্শতলসংক্রান্তমিব শরদলপটনিভিরম্বিতামিব  
অপরিস্ফুটবিভাব্যমানাবয়বাম্

চিত্রাঙ্গদা

শব্দোৎসবে

পা-ছানি ডুবাইয়া দেখিলা আপন  
চরণের আভা।

যেমন 'কাদম্বরী'র মহাশেতা

ব্রহ্মসিনবকোতান-চরণতল-প্রভা-পরিষকা  
লোহিতায়মানেন চক্লপটেন প্রাস্তনিতস্বাৎ

এই হরুপা চিত্রাঙ্গদার সঙ্গে কুরুপা চিত্রাঙ্গদার মিলন সাধিত হবে রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটকে। রূপশী চিত্রাঙ্গদার মধ্যে একটি দৈত ছিলো : তার বাইরে ভান, অস্তরে নির্ভান 'আমি'। এই দুয়ের সমন্বয় ঘটতে, বৈতকে অর্ধেতে রূপান্তরিত করতে রবীন্দ্রনাথ অতিপ্রাকৃতের সঙ্গায়তা নিলেন, 'কুমারসম্ভব'-এর কবির মতো। 'কুমার-সম্ভব'-এ রূপের ভবদুঃপাই বর্ষার্ঘ্য প্রেমের উজ্জীবন, যেমন 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা'র। প্রথম চৌধুরী লিখেছিলেন : "ভাষার সমতা ও ধ্বনির মহনতাওয়ে চিত্রাঙ্গদা মেঘদূত ও কুমার-সম্ভবের স্বজাতীয় ও সমকক্ষ।" আরো কোনো কোনো ভাবেও যে 'চিত্রাঙ্গদা' প্রাচীন সংস্কৃত কাব্যের স্বজাতীয় দেখকা বোধ করি অস্বীকার করা যায় না।\*

\* This article of Hrishikesh Bose establishes how Tagore while trans-  
forming a myth from the *Mahābhārata* for his verse play  
*Chitrangada* (*Chitra* in English translation), also borrows some  
interesting details from Kālidāsa's epic *Kumārāsambhava* and  
Bhagubhāṭṭa's prose romance *Kādambarī*.

The "Manifesto on Translation" reproduced on pages 377-384 of this publication concludes with this statement:

Translators are faced with a choice. Either they can continue to do nothing to improve their lot or they can join together to ensure that at long last they will receive their due. The choice is between apathy and active engagement in a struggle for recognition, between silence and the living voice. The world of translation is largely undiscovered and unexplored, and the time has come to set the projects in order and to learn what can and what cannot be done.

This was drawn up in September 1969. In much less time than is usual for manifestos to be translated into action, the American P. E. N. Translation Committee organized a Conference on Literary Translation which was held in New York City in May 1970. Within another year, the 38 papers read at this conference were published as the book under review here. Contents apart, this is a priceless volume in more senses than the literal one. Generous gifts from publishers Victor Weybright and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, from the economist and financial writer Eliot Janeway, supplemented by funds from the National Council of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts (both in Washington, D.C.) made possible for the organizers to hold the conference as well as to publish the papers. This is a fine example of joint or co-operative sector enterprise in promoting the arts.

The participation of twenty-one distinguished foreigners (non-Americans) gave the conference a truly international flavour, while the papers cover a wide spectrum of languages: American Indian, Bengali, Chinese, Danish, French, German, Greek, Irish (Gaelic), Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Polish, Sanskrit, Spanish, Swedish, Russian and Yiddish. Apart from translators,

the participants included poets, critics, playwrights and publishers—hence a remarkable range of viewpoints is represented in the volume. The papers are as various as their authors. Some papers are as specific as “On Translating from Renaissance Italian” (Sidney Alexander) or “On Translating *Genji*” (Ivan Morris), others are as general as “The Ear in Translation” (Gregory Rabassa) or “The Music of Translation” (Muriel Rukeyser), while some present concepts like “Translation as Experience” (George Reavey) or “The World as Language” (John L. Mich).

The would-be or practising translators will probably find most useful not so much the many papers discussing the theory or practice of translation, but those expressing views on the publishing of English translations of foreign literary works as expressed by three publishers, Theodore M. Purdy, John Macrae III and Gerald Gross. No less practical an aspect of the situation is dealt with by Frank MacShane in his paper on “The Teaching of Translation” which is based on his experience of conducting translation seminars among Columbia University undergraduates.

The necessity of translation is a much-stressed theme throughout the volume—whether stated as strongly as by Dale S. Cunningham (“Indeed, the very survival of civilization as we know it may some day come to depend upon translation”, p. 40), or mildly as by B. J. Chute (“Without translation, our world would narrow mercilessly. Like air and sunlight and good growing earth, translation is our necessity in the creative world”, p. 79). But as for the method of translation, George Rabassa admits at the end of his paper that “in its very last analysis, translation is an instinctive business” (p. 85), and that is ultimately the lesson to be drawn from this book. No central theory of translation or ideal method for translators emerges from these papers. The modes discussed or recommended seem to hark back in the main to the three categories formulated by John Dryden—metaphrase, paraphrase, imitation—as far back as 1680. Some popular twentieth-century modes, however, are discussed in “The Lot of the Translator” by Guy Daniels, while Dale Cunningham’s “The Interaction of Literary and Technical Translators” seeks to explode the growing myth in our time about technical translation being a special and specially difficult branch of translation. The use to which translation has been put in our century

is described by Mirra Ginsberg in a paper entitled "Translation in Russia: The Politics of Translation" which appears practically at the end of the volume. Very early in the volume, in Frances Keene's "For the Embattled Reader", we read: "At such times, the act of translation becomes a moral and political act: he who engages in the translation of forbidden books . . . is as much a freedom fighter as the clandestine printer who sets his type for him or the distributor who risks his life in streets and byways to circulate the message—or the reader of the message himself." (p. 27)

As one passes from paper to paper, a rich display of provocative opinions and comments is offered. Even a casual sampling will reveal these riches:

- "As it is, the selection of works for translation and distribution is more than accidental; it is chaotic and dominated by culturally irrelevant or directly anti-cultural considerations." (p. 56)
- "Translation—is it art, mediation of art, an important weapon in the fatal fight against parochialism as a state of mind? Or is it something uncreative, unimportant, a paradise for pedants?" (p. 63)
- "I cannot imagine how an electronic machine would get the idiomatic, flavorsome, mouth-filling Yiddish of Sholem Aleichem into English, or the rich, subtle variants of dialect of *Huckleberry Finn* into Icelandic. A computer might work for the telephone book or the Sears-Roebuck catalogue. I have a pretty picture of a Ukrainian collective farmer curling up on a cold winter night with a copy of the Manhattan Yellow Pages." (p. 78)
- "... any translated piece of work not only supplies the informations of a foreign writer, but is also to enter the translator's national literature as a new part of it." (p. 88)
- "... translation is, in any case, the art of fascinating failure—which is, nevertheless, a service, loving and illuminating..." (p. 107)
- "A translation, like a woman, can be true and faithful and still miserable." (p. 110)
- "There is no doubt that the poorer the language, the more difficult it is to translate from it, for every word in it is so precise that only one word can be used." (p. 147)



- “It is my contention that the present vogue for imitations is a grave—and perhaps mortal—threat to the art of poetic translation. Consistent with the spasmodic nature of Lowell’s reactions to life in general, all the emphasis is on *impact*, and none on fidelity to the original.” (p. 173)
- “I regard translation as an extension of that which is being translated, not as a separate activity performed by a wise and disinterested craftsman. It is a separate activity but one which strives in the structure of its behavior to *re-perform*, within the materials of one’s own language, the possibilities and special realizations which exist in a foreign work.” (p. 203)
- “One cannot write poems all day long, or work on a novel more than so many hours, but it is often possible to turn to something else, like translation, that does not require the same expenditure of psychic energy. Moreover, translation may be useful to a writer in developing his own literary skills.” (p. 232)
- “Unlike the critic, of whether textual, philosophical or aesthetic concern, the translator cannot discourse, but must imitate—though he must have implicit understanding of all these concerns.” (p. 261)
- “I don’t even wonder if my translations have been good or bad: what I know is that I always tried to guess, as much as I could, what my authors had tried to mean in the books I was translating; and, by so doing, I was rewarded with personal involvements that took me close to some writers’ techniques and sometimes to their inspirational feelings.” (p. 333)
- “... the social humanist factor plays perhaps an even greater role in the work of the translator—a responsible, creative translator—than in the case of a writer. By this I mean that the translator is all the time conscious of the reader, the first reader, meticulous, searching, intuitive, assessing the rises and falls of his author.” (p. 348)

Most of these statements are really asides of the main argument of the papers they are cited from, yet each could well be the central theme of a separate paper—such is the wealth of material presented in this volume. A further marvel is that many of these papers are themselves translations, since the

paper-writers are not all native to English, yet they express themselves with clarity and force.

Amid this abundance of insights into the problems of translation, India is rather feebly represented by two papers, "On Translating from Sanskrit" (Raja Rao) and "On Translating from 'engali'" (Amiya Chakravarty). Raja Rao states that his central theme is that "when European writers (and linguists) discover the metaphysics of the word, the Sanskrit tradition of it, they will realize what a magnificent treasury of human achievement lies buried in these texts" (p. 283); and, after having dwelt almost in trance upon "the metaphysics of the word, in the Sanskrit tradition", he assures a largely European audience, "you will realize how impossible it is to translate Sanskrit prose or verse into any language." (p. 286) If that be so, then Professor Raja Rao was participating in this conference only in order to protest against its objectives.

Amiya Chakravarty's piece was spoken from notes and prepared for publication after revision of what was actually tape-recorded at the conference. The paper thus lacks the organization that distinguishes most of the other pieces in the volume. It also lacks in resourcefulness because he has based his observations solely on the subject of translating Rabindranath Tagore's poetry into English—and that too only on Rabindranath's own efforts. Amiya Chakravarty has himself translated many of Rabindranath's later (that is, post-*Gitanjali*) poems and could profitably have dwelt upon his own experience of such work. Further, he touches upon but does not elaborate the problem unique to Indians attempting translations into English—namely, that they are translating into a language not their own. Nearly all the other papers in this volume assume that translation means translating from a 'foreign' language into the translator's first language.

*Sujit Mukherjee*

**KĀLIDĀSA:** *The Dynasty of Raghu*, translated from the Sanskrit by Robert Antoine S.J. Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1972. Rs 60/Rs 10.

*The Raghuvamśa*, the best and longest of Kālidāsa's verse works, has not been translated into English by many. Father Antoine has done the world of letters a significant service by undertaking

and accomplishing this task. It required two things: a thorough grounding in Sanskrit literature and the power to communicate the beauty of a classical poem in a modern language. These qualities presuppose a third, viz. a familiarity with the great epics in other languages. Needless to say, Father Antoine combines all these in a marked degree; and the result is a fine, accurate and eminently readable translation of one of the world's greatest derivative epics.

The *Raghuvamśa* has a unique theme because it lacks a hero in the conventional sense, unless we accept the rather unusual hero—the line of Raghu. Kālidāsa has presented the rise to power and the slow but sure decline of this line from its zenith, Rāma, to the low and ignominious Agnivarṇa, as if he were telling the story of an individual. Such an epic makes difficult reading because in it a great number of apparently disjointed episodes are apparently held together by the abstract notion of a noble and selfless line of kings, all pursuing a high ideal till they gradually lose their vision and fall from glory and from historical significance. Yet nobody who has read the epic feels that it is a mere series of episodes; the impact is vivid and powerful, and in spite of digressions and descriptive passages the sense of continuity is immediate. But this very unusualness presents many difficulties when it comes to translation. Because Sanskrit, especially of the classical period, has a rich and developed convention which it is next to impossible to translate adequately into any other language. The music, as the translator deplores in his preface, escapes the best translation. Then there are the double entendres, allusions, alliterations and assonances which elude any rendering into a different language. The entire cultural background with its beliefs, practices, social customs, philosophical speculations, ritual conventions and many overt and suppressed assumptions—is so different from the Western cultural milieu that at a first sight translation seems well-nigh impossible.

It is to Father Antoine's credit that he has surmounted all these difficulties with the least apparent effort and that his translation makes extremely pleasant reading. The local and temporal allusions are explained in some very useful notes at the end. The poetry—the only part of which can possibly be retained in translation—is communicated in a straightforward way, with absolute faithfulness to the original. This implies a

faith in Kālidāsa, for through that alone the translator resists the temptation to embellish the original—a pitfall which very few translators have been able to avoid. Abstract thoughts as presented in stanzas like X:20—"Knowing all, you transcend all knowledge; origin of all, you are self-subsistent; unique, you assume all forms"—are extremely difficult to present in a form where the beauty of the original contrast in the juxtapositions can be communicated without any loss of the stark and sheer poetry. There are entire passages like the opening passage of Canto I, Raghu's conquest (IV), Aja going to the *śṛāgambhara*, his marriage and lamentation at Indumatī's death (VI-VIII) which read like original composition—so effortless is the translation. It is reading passages like these that one realizes what great care and effort actually went into the translation to make it such a success.

There appear to be a few oversights and inaccuracies which, though minor for the most part, would best be avoided in the next edition. Thus in I:26 we have: "He milked the earth in view of the sacrifice; Indra milked the sky in view of the harvest." One wonders if the slightly ambiguous "in view of the" could be substituted by "for the purpose of" or some such phrase. In II:19 we have "the line of her eyelashes winking indolently" when the actual sense is, the eyelashes were too indolent to win i.e., the eyes drank him in unwinkingly. In II:21 the phrase "as though it were the gate of fulfilled desire" should be "the gate of fulfilment of desire", for the fulfilment was yet to come. II:40 has "the fact that one cannot defend what he should defend with his weapons" is slightly inaccurate; it should be "that trust (raksya) which cannot be defended with weapons (śāstreṇa aśakyaarakaya)". II:49 misplaced an adjective: "krśānupratimā" actually qualifies the preceptor while in the translation it has been shifted to the anger. II:53 translates "ksatra" as "that which"; "he who" would have been better, for it really is a synonym of "ksatriya" as the verse very clearly indicates. IX:78 has: "The old man cursed the king while his tears dropped in his hands." It misses a vital nuance, for in ancient India one touched water before cursing or giving gifts—the water warranted the validity of the act. Here the tear-drops held in the old bereaved father's hands did for the ritual water. Much of the poignancy is lost through the omission; the allusion needs at least to be added in a note. In XIII:9 we read: "The ocean has

his own way of making love with his wives, the rivers." The actual sense seems to be "the ocean is equally disposed to all his wives." In the famous XIV:66 we have "so that, if only in another life, you may again be my husband without separation." Here one emphasis is lost and the other is suppressed; we should have, "In the next life may you become my husband once more and may there be no separation." Sitā really expresses two wishes and the connection between the two adds poignancy to her wish. XIV:84 is another famous stanza where "savāṣpa" is better translated as "filled with tears" rather than "burst into tears", for "tusāra" in the image is not rain; it is the film-like unshed tear in the eyes that justifies the image.

One may pick a few other minor inaccuracies like these. In a work as vast in scope, as exacting in execution and as consistently successful as *The Dynasty of Raghu* these are really insignificant blemishes, and one feels confident that such a scrupulous translator will certainly eradicate them in the next edition. Meanwhile we should congratulate him on this extremely sensitive and strikingly faithful translation of one of Kālidāsa's masterpieces. Mere learning would not have performed the task so well, it required a responsive and alert mind steeped in the classical lore of both the East and West. The combination was most fortunate and we welcome the volume as a long-awaited work, a real asset to the world of translated classics.

*Sukumari Bhattacharji*

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Guest Editors of the 'Commonwealth' issue of *Studies in the Novel*, IV, 2 (Summer 1972) have kindly allowed us to reprint in this number of *JJCL* the last article ("The Indian Novel in English") written by our late colleague David McCutcheon. The journal is published quarterly from North Texas University in the United States. We are grateful for this permission.

The special issue from which the article is reprinted "reconnoiters vast territory, both spatially and temporally", and includes studies in English novels from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, West & South Africa, West Indies and India. The only other article from India in this issue of *SN* is by K. S. Narayana Rao and is called "The Indian Novel in English: A Search for Identity". "The Indian novel in English," writes Mr. Rao, "is at crossroads, and although undecided in some ways, it is clearly distinguished by its resolute will to go on..."

#### ON RECORD

*David J. McCutcheon Memorial Lectures*: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, the Bengali Academy of Letters, organized a series of five excellent lectures on temples of Bengal, and Bengali folk art, in memory of our deceased colleague, David McCutcheon in April-May 1972.

We are happy to learn that for his monograph on the late medieval temples of Bengal, published by the Asiatic Society, David McCutcheon has been posthumously awarded the prestigious Tagore Prize for 1972-73 by the Government of West Bengal.

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"Comparative Literature is continuing to gain in the Orient. The two fine comparative literature journals of India (Jadavpur) and Japan (*Hikaku Bungaku*) have been joined, as of April, 1970, by the *Tamkang Review*, a 'journal mainly devoted to comparative studies between Chinese and foreign literatures'."

—*Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 20 (1971)

## NEW NATIONAL COMPARATIVE LITERATURE SOCIETIES AND JOURNALS

Among the national societies recognized recently by the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) are the societies of Canada, West Germany, Philippines, Hungary and Romania.

University of Windsor in Canada has published the first issue of *The Canadian Journal of Comparative Literature* (October 1972). Another Canadian journal 'for Comparative Study of Literature and Ideas', *Mosaic*, has been coming out regularly since October 1967 from the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg.

## COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

Professor Rolf Henkel from Kabul University delivered in December 1949 and January 1950 three lectures at the University of Calcutta on the study of Comparative Literature. The lectures were later printed by the Calcutta University Press in 1952. This is what Professor Henkel said on 'translation work': "As nobody, not even a scientist, can learn all or even only the most important languages on earth, we ought to put up with a few flaws of translation; otherwise we miss too much. The only thing we can do is to train better translators and to select the best among them and put them to great tasks. Do not forget that the Nobel Prize was given to Rabindranath Tagore when his poems were submitted in Stockholm in translation (into German); and it is said that one who can read English or German, has access to almost anything of importance written under the sun." (p. 13)

## SEMINAR ON COMPARATIVE APPROACHES TO THE NOVEL

We are happy to report that Comparative Literature is recently beginning to gain some grounds in the so-far invincible Indian academic scene. After the all-India Seminar on Approaches to Drama held in Jadavpur last year, there was an all-India Seminar on Comparative Approaches to the Novel held at the University of Mysore, in January 1973. It was a three-day seminar (25-27) organized by the Department of Post-graduate Studies and Research in English where a number of interesting papers were presented on various aspects of the novel, dealing with novels from at least two different language areas. The comparative approaches were either thematic, or structural, or dealt

with trends and movements. Some papers were concerned with parallels and contrasts, some studied influences or receptions and some were simply comparative surveys. The areas covered included Indian, European, African and Far Eastern literatures. Other than university teachers from different parts of India, the seminar brought together young journalists and poets, and two well-known South Indian novelists, the Tamil Ashokamitran, and the National Award-winning Kannada novelist, Ananthamoorthy. The discussions were lively and the general atmosphere was encouraging for the participants. We hope to give our readers a taste of the seminar by presenting three of its papers in this issue. We are looking forward to the publication of the transactions of the seminar so that all the valuable papers are available to the Comparative Literature enthusiasts in India.

A reminder to our readers: Jadavpur is preparing to hold a similar seminar again, this time on comparative approaches to poetry. Please start thinking up your papers!

#### BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS FROM THE DEPARTMENT

A paperback volume on Comparative Literature in Germany and India is being produced by the department for Horst Erdmann Verlag of Tübingen. The Volume will contain the German articles in English from Vol. 10 of *JJCL* and two Indian articles in Comparative Literature—one by Buddhadeva Bose, and the other by Robert Antoine S.J. The volume will be ready by the end of July 1973.

A Bengali translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, by Robert Antoine and Hrishikesh Bose, has already been published. This is the first important Bengali translation made directly from Latin.

The next book from the department is going to be a Bengali translation of two major documents of French Romanticism: Hugo's "Préface" to *Cromwell* and Gautier's "Préface" to *Made-moiselle de Maupin*.

*Another Project:* A critical study of two plays (published in 1874 and 1875) by Jyotirindranath Tagore. These were the first and only translations into Bengali from Racine.

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Robert Antoine S.J., Swapan Majumdar, Subir Roy Choudhury and Nabaneeta Dev Sen have helped in various ways in the preparation of this volume.





## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

*Robert Antoine's* paper is a part of an extensive research on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. His translation of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* into English has been reviewed in this issue. A teacher in the Department of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur, his translation of *Aeneid* into Bengali in collaboration with Dr. Hrishikesh Bose is the latest publication of this department. + *Sukumari Bhattacharji* of the Department of Sanskrit at Jadavpur, and a one-time member of this department, is presently working on a book about Vedic Sanskrit literature. Her book on Indian theogony, published from the Cambridge University Press, is an important contribution to Sanskrit studies. + *Hrishikesh Bose* teaches Comparative Literature at Jadavpur. His translation of Virgil into Bengali with Father Antoine has been published in our Monographs Series: + *A. K. Chanda* is teaching comparative European fiction and drama in the Department of Post-graduate Studies and Research in English at Mysore University. Educated in London and Cambridge, Mr. Chanda is going to the East-West Center at Hawaii to do his doctoral dissertation. This paper was presented at the Mysore Seminar on the Novel (see *JJCL* Notes). + *Amiya Dev's* paper was also read at the Seminar on Approaches to the Novel at Mysore. Educated at Jadavpur and the United States, Dr. Dev has taught for a while in the United States. He is a senior member of this department. + *R. K. Kaul's* paper was presented at the Jadavpur Seminar on Approaches to Drama. Educated in India and Cambridge, Professor Kaul is the Head of the Department of English at the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur. + *David J. McCutcheon's* article was developed by the late author from a talk given to the India Group of the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, London, on July 21, 1971. + *Sujit Mukherjee's* book, *A Passage to America* is a study of the reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the United States. Educated in Patna and Pennsylvania, Dr. Mukherjee has shifted from teaching English at the University of Poona, to working with the Orient Longman in Delhi. + *Nabaneeta Dev Sen's* paper is another acquisition from the Mysore Seminar. Having graduated from Jadavpur, Harvard and Indiana, Dr. Sen has done Post-doctoral work at such varied places as Cambridge, Berkeley and Delhi. A reader in Comparative Literature, she is representing Jadavpur at the I.C.L.A. Congress in Canada this year.